MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE



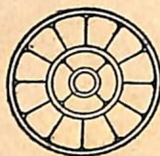
JULY, 1957



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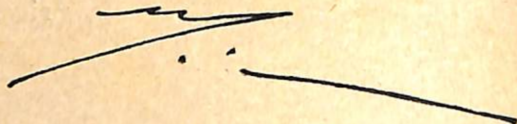


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute:

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. IX **No. 6**

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

14-12-1936

MYSELF : Why should joy be a necessary precondition for writing poetry ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Art is a thing of beauty and beauty and Ananda are closely connected, they go together. If the Ananda is there, then the beauty comes out more clearly—if not, it has to struggle out painfully and slowly. That is quite natural.

MYSELF : I will put in any amount of labour and that should be enough.

SRI AUROBINDO : Labour is not enough for the things to pour down. What is done with labour only is done with difficulty, not with a downpour. The joy in the labour must be there for a free outflow. You have very queer psychological ideas, I must say.

MYSELF : How can I have any joy when what I write seems such poor stuff and delivered with much perspiration ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is your confounded nature. How can the man of sorrows feel joy in anything or any self-confidence ? His strain is "Oh how miserable am I ! Oh how dark am I ! Oh how worthless is all that I do," etc. etc.

But apart from the M of S, you seem to suffer from a mania of self-depreciatory criticism. Many artists and poets have that ; as soon as they look at their work they find it awfully poor and bad. (I had that myself often varied with the opposite feeling, Arjava also has it) ; but to have it while writing is its most excruciating degree of intensity. Better get rid of it if you want to write freely.

MYSELF : Please give some force to complete the incomplete poem I have been at. I fear to touch it lest the coming lines should fail in their quality.

SRI AUROBINDO : Well, it's that kind of thing that stands in the way,

MYSELF : The first portion I wrote quickly and almost dosing. Why dosing ?

SRI AUROBINDO : This is a medical spelling.

Probably in order that your waking mind might not interfere. Dozing is often a form of semi-samadhi in which the waking mind retires and the subliminal self comes bobbing up.

NIRODBARAN

SOME NOTES ON SRI AUROBINDO'S POEMS

2

WITH regard to *Urvasie*, the general conception of the Apsaras (or Opsaras, as Sri Aurobindo in his early days under the influence of Bengali pronunciation calls them) may be of interest. Here we may fruitfully draw upon his own Notes, found among his old unrevised writings on Kalidasa's *Vikramorvasie* which he has rendered into English as *The Hero and the Nymph*. When the Gods and the Titans had joined to churn the primeval Ocean of Being to bring up for the earth a marvel which neither side alone could have evolved, then after aeonic labour and various trying vicissitudes the Apsaras came into being out of the profundities. Says Sri Aurobindo : "The Apsaras are the most beautiful and romantic conception on the lesser plane of Hindu mythology. From the moment that they arose out of the waters of the milky Ocean, robed in ethereal raiment and heavenly adornment, waking melody from a million lyres, the beauty and light of them has transformed the world. They crowd in the sunbeams, they flash and gleam over heaven in the lightnings, they make the azure beauty of the sky ; they are the light of sunrise and sunset and the haunting voices of forest and field. They dwell too in the life of the soul ; for they are the ideal pursued by the poet through his lines, by the artist shaping his soul [on] canvas, by the sculptor seeking a form in the marble ; for the joy of their embrace the hero flings his life into the rushing torrent of battle ; the sage, musing upon God, sees the shining of their limbs and falls from his white ideal. The delight of life, the beauty of things, the attraction of sensuous beauty, this is what the mystic and romantic side of the Hindu temperament strove to express in the Apsaras. The original meaning is everywhere felt as a shining background, but most in the older allegories, especially the strange and romantic legend of Pururavus and we first have it in the Brahmanas and the Vishnupurana."

The Apsaras are also "the divine Hetaira of Paradise, beautiful singers and actresses whose beauty and art relieve the arduous and world-long struggle of the Gods against the forces that tend towards disruption by the Titans who would restore Matter to its original atomic condition or of dissolution by the sages and hermits who would make phenomena dissolve into the One who is above phenomena." "Ideals of all the plastic and sensuous arts fall within

the scope of the Apsara ; she is actress, songstress, musician, painter. When they arose from the waves neither the gods nor the demons accepted them as wives ; accepted by none they became common to all ; for neither the great active faculties of man nor the great destructive recognise sensuous delight and charm as their constant and sufficient mistress, but rather as the joy and refreshment of an hour, an accompaniment or diversion in their constant pursuit of the recognised ideal to which they are wedded."

Urvasie is the fairest of the Apsaras—and Sri Aurobindo, unlike Kalidasa, does not fail to present her as she has been pictured by Hindu mythology. Two fine passages may be pointed out in this connection. One is the passage in which Pururavus sees Urvasie. Pururavus's words here are not just a lover's idealising imagination running riot : together with it is the expression of the mythopoeic philosophy behind the Apsara-conception. The other passage, designable as *The Man and the Nymph*, contains some of Sri Aurobindo's subtlest and most felicitous poetry, is absolutely explicit and goes to the heart of the matter. Yes, Sri Aurobindo brings out the Goddess-function of his heroine, but still only as felt by Pururavus and seen by her sister-companion and not as manifested by her in action. Urvasie in herself bears out almost what Sri Aurobindo notes of Kalidasa's creation : "His presentation of her is simply that of a beautiful and radiant woman deeply in love. Certainly the glories of her skiey residence, the far-off luminousness and the free breath of the winds are about her, but they are her atmosphere rather than part of herself. The essential idea of her is natural, frank and charming womanliness....If this is a nymph of heaven, one thinks, then heaven must be beautiful like the earth." Sri Aurobindo's poem is meant to be not an epiphany of the Apsara so much as an idyll-epic of human love, showing the rush of a regal heart beyond all bonds and bounds of life towards perfect beauty embodied, a rush through varied scenes of the earth into the above-earth that is the true home of such beauty. We may add that Sri Aurobindo, particularly at the end, does not leave it unrecognised that a rush of this type is not all that is man's ideal and this sublime sensuousness, though an uplifting movement of the heart, is bound to leave a good deal of man's destiny unfulfilled. The poem, however, does not abide mainly on the philosophic or ethical level, striking any complete balance of Pururavus's deeds : it depicts centrally the colour and the strength of a one-pointed love daring the seemingly impossible and achieving it.

Urvasie contains a lot of allusions to mythology and legend—too many to be exhaustively dealt with. A couple may here be elucidated. In the passage somewhere towards the close, where Pururavus's ascent towards Urvasie is described, the lines:

...In thy line the Spirit Supreme
Shall bound existence with one human form;
In Mathura and ocean Dwarca Man
Earthly perfectibility of soul
Example,

refer to Sri Krishna the Avatar, traditionally considered the complete incarnation of divinity, who was born in Mathura and many of whose famous deeds were by the waters of Dwarca. He was of the same "lunar line" as Pururavus, unlike the earlier Avatar Sri Rama who belonged to the "solar line" about which are the verses :

...Upon my heights
Breathing God's air, strong as the sky and pure,
Dwell only Ixvaacou's children.

* *

Love and Death, according to a letter of Sri Aurobindo's, "was written in a white heat of inspiration during 14 days of continuous writing—in the mornings, of course, for I had to attend office the rest of the day and saw friends in the evening. I never wrote anything with such ease and rapidity before or after....I don't think there was any falling of the seed of the idea or growth and maturing of it; it just came—from my reading about the story of Ruru in the *Mahabharata*; I thought, 'Well, here's a subject', and the rest burst out of itself..."

In the lines, occurring in the passage where the God of Love declares himself and there is a demand for sacrifice,

As tyrants in the fierceness of others' pangs
Joy and feel strong, clothing with brilliant fire,
Tyrants in Titan lands....,

the phrase "clothing with brilliant fire" was put before Sri Aurobindo for elucidation. He replied that it was suggested by "Nero's 'living torches,' the Christians indued with combustible matter and set on fire in his fêtes—according to the history (?) or the legend."

Sri Aurobindo was also asked about the meaning of the word "absolve", in the following lines from the same passage :

But if with price, ah God ! what easier ! Tears
Dreadful, innumerable I will absolve
Or pay with anguish through the centuries ...

The usage here was contrasted to that in the lines in the passage dealing with Ruru's descent into the Underworld :

For late
I saw her mid those pale inhabitants
Whom bodily anguish visits not, but thoughts
Sorrowful and dumb memories absolve,
And martyrdom of scourged hearts quivering.

Sri Aurobindo replied : "In the second passage it is used in the ordinary sense. 'Absolution' means release from sins or from debts—the sorrowful thoughts and memories are the penalty or payment which procures the release from the debt which has been accumulated by the sins and errors of human life. In the first passage 'absolve' is used in its Latin and not in the English sense, = 'to pay off a debt', but here the sense is stretched a little. Instead of saying 'I will pay off with tears', Ruru says: 'I will pay off tears' as the price of the absolution. This Latinisation and the inversion of syntactical connections are familiar licenses in English poetry—of course, it is incorrect, but a deliberate incorrectness, a violence purposely done to the language in order to produce a poetic effect. The English language, unlike the French and some others, likes, as Stephen Phillips used to say, to have liberties taken with it. But, of course, before one can take these liberties one must be a master of the language—and, in this case, of the Latin also." (1931)

Apropos "liberties", we may note two slightly unusual constructions both in the passage concerned with the speech of the God of Love. In

...Whom thou desirest seeing not the green
And common lovely sounds hast quite forgot—

we have an effective change of turn in the second line where we might expect something like "And quite forgetting common lovely sounds". Instead, we have an independent clause conferring importance on what is spoken, and "thou" is understood. In

...the wild
Marred face and passionate and will not leave
Kissing dead lips that shall not chide him more—

we have either a relative pronoun or else "it" understood before "will not leave".

On *Love and Death* we have a couple of valuable comments by the poet himself in private letters. One that touches also on some general issues runs: "A poet likes only the poetry that appeals to his own temperament or taste, the rest he condemns or ignores. Contemporary poetry, besides, seldom gets its right judgment from contemporary critics, even. You expect for instance *Love and Death* to make a sensation in England—I don't expect it in the least: I shall be agreeably surprised if it gets more than some qualified praise, and if it does not get even that, I shall be neither astonished nor discomfited. I know the limitations of the poem and its qualities and I know that the part about the descent into Hell can stand comparison with some of the best English poetry; but I don't expect any contemporaries to see it. If they do, it will be good luck or divine grace, that is all. Nothing can be more futile than for a poet to write in expectation of contemporary fame or praise, however agreeable that may be, if it comes: but it is not of much value; for very few poets have enjoyed a great contemporary fame and very great poets have been neglected in their time. A poet has to go on his way, trying to gather hints from what people say for or against, when their criticisms are things he can profit by, but not otherwise moved (if he can manage it)—seeking mainly to sharpen his own sense of self-criticism by the help of others. Differences of estimate need not surprise him at all."

The other comment concerns the passage in which the Love-God Kama or Madan speaks about himself. In the letter to which it is a reply, some doubt was expressed whether this passage, moving and powerful though it was, could be considered a peak of poetry. Sri Aurobindo wrote : "My own private opinion agrees with Arjava's estimate rather than with yours. These lines may not be astonishing in the sense of an unusual effort of constructive imagination and vision like the descent into Hell; but I do not think I have, elsewhere, surpassed this speech in power of language, passion and truth of feeling and nobility and felicity of rhythm all fused together into a perfect whole. And I think I have succeeded in expressing the truth of the godhead of Kama, the godhead of vital love (I am not using 'vital' in the strict Yogic sense; I mean the love that draws lives passionately together or throws them into or upon each other) with a certain completeness of poetic sight and perfection of poetic power which puts it on one of the peaks—even if not the highest possible peak—of achievement. That is my private opinion—but, of course, all do not need to see alike in these matters."

*　　　　　　　　　　　　*

An Image is the earliest hexameters of Sri Aurobindo. It was written before he had evolved his theory of true English Quantity and it needed some corrective touches afterwards, but they were very few.

* *

Transiit, Non Periit is Sri Aurobindo's earliest sonnet—a combination of the Shakespearean form with the Petrarchan-Miltonic. The octet (as Sri Aurobindo used to name what is usually called the octave) is in Shakespearean quatrains unconnected by any repetitive rhyme-structure. The sestet is not a quatrain followed by a couplet but one of the many combinations of three-rhyme-pairs possible to the Petrarchan-Miltonic form. Also, the run-on of the octet into the sestet is a Miltonic though not Petrarchan characteristic.

* *

Chitrangada, fragment of an early composition of which more than one fragmentary version exists, was touched up here and there when republished in the forties from the files of the periodical *Karmayogin* edited by Sri Aurobindo in the first decade of the century. But the line,

> I praise my father's prescient love,

seems to have escaped notice, for it remains a tetrameter.

The blank verse is akin to that of *Urvasie* and *Love and Death* while suggesting in places the style of *Baji Prabhou*. Only one technical liberty stands out clear-cut—line 6 with its inverted fifth foot:

> Prescient of grey realities. Rising,...

But there is another line with a curious and unusual scansion if it is to be taken as a pentameter :

> A turretted gate inwalling my rule.

We may note that, like *Urvasie* and *Love and Death* as well as *Savitri* which are Sri Aurobindo's three other blank-verse poems dealing with subjects from mythology or legend, *Chitrangada* has a theme of love and parting under the action of fate :

> This year of thee is mine until the end.
> The Gods demand the rest.

We may note too that, like those poems, this begins with the motif of darkness passing into day. The transitional dawn-hour has a particular appeal for Sri Aurobindo : *Ilion* begins no less with it. But neither in *Urvasie* nor *Love and Death* is the dawn given any particular significance or made the immediate *mise en scène*. Though the broad mythico-spiritual import woven into the fabric of the tale as in *Ilion* or the profound philosophico-mystic symbolism integral to the story as in *Savitri* is absent, we have here for the first time in Sri Aurobindo's early narratives a touch of the depths in the dawn-moment against whose pull towards dateless memories and formless yearnings Urjoon warns but which Chitrangada feels as taking us "near to the quiet truth of things". In other poems also of Sri Aurobindo's the dawn is a-quiver with inner suggestions—as when the invocation goes up in *Ahana* from the Hunters of Joy to the Goddess of the first break of inner illumination, and as when the soul has a Vedantic awakening in the short piece entitled *Reminiscence*.

* *

As the only available copy of the drama, *Perseus the Deliverer*, had some damaged pages, a bit of reconstruction was done here and there for the *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942) and while doing it Sri Aurobindo added one passage with what seems a prophetic eye to the development of the contemporary phenomenon of Hitler :

This man for a few hours became the vessel
Of an occult and formidable Force
And through his form it did fierce terrible things
Unhuman : but his small and gloomy mind
And impure dark heart could not contain the Force.
It turned in him to madness and demoniac
Huge longings. Then the Power withdrew from him
Leaving the broken incapable instrument,
And all its might was spilt from his body. Better
To be a common man mid common men
And live an unaspiring mortal life
Than call into oneself a Titan strength
Too dire and mighty for its human frame,
That only afflicts the oppressed astonished world,
Then breaks its user.

This passage may be compared with the slightly earlier poem entitled *The Dwarf Napoleon*, dealing directly with the Nazi dictator.

*   *

Baji Prabhou, though not written on the whole in the strictly epic style which blends amplitude and poise with power, is epic in substance and suggestion everywhere and makes without the least loss in essential poetry a battle-piece comparable to any in the world's literature. Being blank verse, there is nothing in it of the ballad-tone whose facility as well as jerkiness often lowers the inspiration of such pieces in English literature : it has a terse strong construction, often with a touch of Latinisation, reminiscent of Milton, and its movement is perfectly controlled and manoeuvred. Some of the turns are a little obscure. In the phrase,

> Yielding up, the dangerous gorge
> Saw only on the gnarled and stumbling rise
> The dead and wounded heaped,

the two opening words refer to the retreat, "experienced" by the hill, of the broken assailants whom the hill gave up from its slope, thus baring its own contour to view, and from whose ranks the dead and wounded alone were seen by the incline on its difficult terrain. In the phrase,

> So hot a blast and fell
> Stayed their unsteady valour, their retreat
> So swift and obstinate a question galled,
> Few through the hail survived,

the conjunction "that" is understood after "obstinate" and this adjective goes with "swift" to apply to "retreat" and not to the galling qestion which without qualifying words and even before the description is over is made to arise as a result of, on the one hand, the deadly intensity of the "blast" and, on the other, the paradoxical character of the retreat ("obstinate" no less than "swift") and the strange combination of boldness and unsteadiness that was met by the blast. This question finds its sense only in the next sentence where the chiefs witnessing the rout and drawing back their forces are said to meet "in dubious council" to decide whether to quit or continue.

The word "griding", liable to be confused with "grinding", in the line,

A Mogul lance ran griding through his arm,

is a word in fair use in older poetry, meaning "to cut or scrape with strident or grating sound". It is followed by the preposition "through" or "along".

Two proper names call for a little explanation. Bhavani is the Goddess-Spirit of India in its martial aspect, guarding the culture and religion of the country with a supernatural sword. Shivaji, fired by the sense of danger to the soul of Hinduism from Aurangzeb's Muslim fanaticism and autocracy, was a devotee of Bhavani and supposed to have been inspired and guided by Her. His devotion was further fostered by the sannyasi saint Ramdas whom he accepted as his guru and at whose feet he was more than once ready to surrender his kingdom. Ramdas influenced the Mahratta mind greatly in those days, as is suggested by the picture, in the poem, of Suryaji

singing to the hills
A song of Ramdas as he smote and slew.

* *

Invitation and *Mother of Dreams* were both written in Alipore Jail in 1907, in two entirely different styles—the one bare and powerful, the other richly and complexly stimulating. It is curious how, despite the four walls of a cell, they breathe of freedom and spaciousness, while the sense of the lonely which the one conveys is but of a sovereign kingdom far above the populous and ordinary human and the feeling of transcendence which the second communicates is of a reaching beyond the outer world through the crowded wonders of the subtle planes towards some "peak of divine endeavour" that is supracosmic.

* *

The Vedantin's Prayer is one of the first signs of the typical Aurobindonian Yoga, all the more notable because of the associations of the word "Vedantin". The traditional Vedantin who merges in the infinite silent Self of selves has no call for prayer : prayer can be directed only to some supreme Lord and Lover. Here the usual pressing towards the "hidden door of Knowledge" is mixed with a response to "the eternal Will" and a cry unto Love to outpour and unto Strength to fulfil itself. We may say this is the Vedantin of the many-sided Upanishads and especially of the synthesising Gita, standing on the

verge of the spiritual vision and discipline inspired by the Aurobindonian Supermind's integrality.

* *

A Vision of Science is one of the two poems—the other being *In the Moonlight*—which Sri Aurobindo refers to in a letter about the change in scientific outlook in our day. He says that it prophesies the awakening by science to the hollowness of its own early materialistic dogmatism, an awakening which is part presage of a new era of spiritual seeking and experience.

* *

The inspirational sources, in terms of psychology, of *To the Sea* were stated by Sri Aurobindo in a letter thus : "The poem was produced by a collaboration of the dynamic poetic intelligence with the higher vital urge."

* *

In the Moonlight has the passage:

Two genii in the dubious heart of man,
    Two great unhappy foes together bound
    Wrestle and strive to win unhampered ground ;
They strive for ever since the race began.

One from his body like a bridge of fire
    Mounts upward azure-winged with eager eyes ;
One in his brain deep-mansioned labouring lies
    And clamps to earth the spirit's high desire.

These lines may be compared to some of Goethe's in *Faust*, Englished by G. Lowes Dickinson and Susan Stawell in their *Goethe and Faust* published several years after *In the Moonlight*. The translation runs :

Twin brethren dwell within me, twins of strife,
And either fights to free him from the other ;
One grips the earth in savage lust of life,
Clutches the ground and wallows in the mire.
The other lifts himself and struggles free,

Tearing the chains that bind him to his brother,
Beating the air with wings of vast desire
Toward the far realm of his great ancestry.

* *

A propos the incarnation of the Divine and the advent of the Age of Gold on the heels of the Iron Age after "the last fierce spasms of the dying past" have shaken the nations, as suggested at the end of *In the Moonlight*, we may quote the magnificent passage from Book III, Canto 4 of *Savitri* :

A giant dance of Shiva tore the past,
There was a thunder as of worlds that fall ;
Earth was o'errun with fire and the roar of Death
Clamouring to slay a world his hunger had made ;
There was a clangour of Destruction's wings :
The Titan's battle-cry was in my ears,
Alarm and rumour shook the armoured Night.
I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth ;
Forerunners of a divine multitude
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life.
I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality.
Into the fallen human sphere they came,
Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,
Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,
Bodies made beautiful by the Spirit's light,
Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,
Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,
Approaching eyes of a diviner man,
Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,

Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.
High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,
Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways
And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods
And dancers within rapture's golden doors,
Their tread one day shall change the suffering earth
And justify the light on Nature's face.

* *

Among the poems of Sri Aurobindo's middle period, *The Rishi* represents, in a semi-dramatic form, the fullest philosophic statement of the all-round ancient Indian spirituality, at once life-transcending and life-embracing, which later ages broke up into many divergent strains and finally tended to narrow down to one predominant strain of other-worldly renunciation. The fourfold scheme of experience found in the Mandukya Upanishad is here : Virāt, the gross outer, called Waking—Hiranyagarbha, the subtle inner, called Dream—Prajnā, the causal inmost, called Sleep—the sheer absolute Self, simply called *Turiya* or Fourth. We must remember that in the Upanishad's Dream there is no unreality, just as in its Sleep there is no emptiness : they merely designate depths of consciousness in which is an existence greater and truer than in the surface dimensions that are usually our life. In fact, Dream is the rich sustaining medium, the world-shaping Thought-power, through which the outer manifestation takes place, while Sleep is the ultimate cause and creator of things, the supreme omniscient and omnipotent Divinity hidden within all and holding in itself the archetypal seed-form of everything. The absolute Self is indeed utterly featureless, an indivisible unity of infinite Peace, but it is not cut off from the other three poises : those poises are its own, and though as the pure Ground of them it is free of them their activity is its Peace loosened forth, their multiplicity its Oneness diversely deployed, and its freedom is not limited by non-manifestation even as it is not limited by manifestation.

A direct poetic version of the fourfold scheme is in a passage in *Savitri*, Book XI, Canto 1, pp. 763-765.

K. D. SETHNA

"GOD'S DOORWAY"

A SHINING door, immense and unmoving, stands between our worship and the Beyond. That is all the light vouchsafed to us, a hard light blocking our passage to the ultimate Secrecy. We knock and knock, but no grace slides through the fast fitting, no glimpse of the other side is given us by any relenting of the giant hinges. Still, we find that every knock gathers—with its harsh and hurtful rebound from the surface of gold confronting us—a ringing sweetness, a most melodious and heart-ravishing "Nay" to all the importunate prayers of our flesh and blood. Here is a refusal that is a rapture more rich than our grandest triumphs in the world. Out of its mysterious reverberation our deepest poetry takes birth and, though we fail, the failure of our effort to pass beyond our finitude is an affliction which is the most wonderful creativity known to mortals.

But is this superb affliction everlasting ? Yes, so long as our attempt to draw an answer from the Beyond remains entangled with outward things. We look at the tremendous beauty that shines upon us from the universe in spite of all the shadows that fall across its face and we throw our minds upon the huge and baffling spectacle to understand its appearances. But to know what is inside those appearances we must go inside the consciousness in us that catches their challenge. The mind must turn inward its sense of the cosmic beauty. The usual subjective tensions of poetry do not go far enough. Their "soul-searchings" no more than hover on the verge of the true abyss that must be plumbed. Not on the peripheries or the mid-ways but in the centre of our cosmos-thrilled being is to be found the magic perfection which inspires each effort of ours to outgrow finitude. What is behind the universe is also behind ourselves who are a part of the universe. But while we cannot break open the universe's heart, we have pathways leading towards our own depths, knowing which we shall know the Beyond that is at once hinted and hidden everywhere. The shining door by which we are blocked is the outward gaze of our eyes ; our eyes open and the Mystery gets shut. By shutting them completely and looking inward to the sheer centre we shall see what lies on the other side of the great door—the Divine Loveliness—and having done so we may open them outward to find the Light and the Beauty no longer hard but yielding and responsive to our touch, letting us in through their

splendour to the same supreme Delight. From our turning towards this vision and experience there is born the poetry that is called mystical.

People believe mysticism to be an exalted dumbness and incompatible with any mode of speech, even the exalted speech of poetry. The mystical plane, they argue, is above distinctions—an infinite featureless unity. How can such a world be expressed in the language of a world of countless objects that are separate and clearly defined ? This question is rooted in an error. The mystical world is not a featureless unity. It has indeed a vast unity which can be felt as featureless by an exclusive concentration on it; but, on the basis of the experience of an inalienable oneness, there is an experience of infinite diversity—distinctions innumerable are visioned and felt though with no sense of rigid limitation or mutual exclusiveness. Line, colour, mass, design are not lost : they cease to be a hard shutting in and shutting out, they become pervaded by a single reality, a single consciousness, a single bliss. That is the nature of the balanced mystical experience, whether cosmic or transcendental.

The cosmic experience, enfolding a universe whose parts have jagged edges looking imperfect and ugly, bears a vision in which the jagged edges of the different parts fit into one another and make a perfect and beautiful whole. The transcendental experience has the vision of a universe whose perfect whole carries the fitting together of parts that have themselves flawlessly beautiful contours : this is the universe of archetypes, of ideal forms which our jagged universe is meant progressively to manifest. Both in the cosmic vision and the transcendental, there is no compulsive loss of distinctions and so no inability to use language with its lights and shadows of a world where distinctions have play. Doubtless, the language of mysticism does not move always in step with the language of logic ; but neither does poetry obey the logician's dictate. Not systematic thinking so much as harmonious perception is the power of the poetic consciousness—and this power mysticism seizes upon as akin to its own and charges with its hidden intensities. To charge it thus is to make poetry's habitual "in-feeling", its moment after moment of sudden felicitous penetration of things, function in a new province of its own nature : the mystic does not distort it to a use utterly alien and unpoetic. Hence he need be no outcast from the golden-voiced circle of the Muse.

The end of mysticism is not silence. But the source of mystical poetry must ever be a deep and large ego-exceeding silence, a hushed receptivity of the mind and heart in which they are swept beyond their merely human experiences. When that silence is found in the being, even for an instant, the poet becomes capable of hearing voices which come from above the normal level of consciousness, above even the subliminal recesses to which he is usually

open. Only when we attempt, without any self-exceeding or illumination, to utter mystical truths we are borne down by the conviction that we are trying to utter the Unutterable, define the Indefinable : an awed impotence seems all our art in the face of that Mystery. We lapse, not unnaturally, to the conclusion that the Spirit escapes utterance and negates distinctions, whereas the sole legitimate conclusion is that the speech of the mere mind is not competent and that our normal imagination is incapable of getting spiritual reality into focus. To discard speech and lay aside vision as non-mystical is a grave blunder.

Every plane of consciousness in us has its own speech and vision, characterised by its own peculiar rhythm of being. Shakespeare's

> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well

is a triumph of exquisite pathos that goes home to our vital nerves, as it were, making us feel and see poignantly through the sensitive life-force in us : our guts seem to respond—like flames that are wind-shaken and go out. Shelley's

> He has outsoared the shadow of our night

has an exaltation, a threnodic thrill, of the intellect—its words are plucked out of a passion of the mind-energy and not the life-force : our brain-cells grow warm and appear to stretch upward a kindled thought-power. Suppose we came across an account of death in some such terms as Sri Aurobindo's

> Rapt, thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast.

Is there not here a marked characteristic absent in the lines of Shakespeare and Shelley ? The whole movement is different, it does not take place in the impassioned life-force or the impassioned mind-energy, though it has affinities with both of them—a word-design and rhythm-urge that have a concrete touch upon our nerves as in Shakespeare and at the same time an atmosphere of ideative height as in Shelley—but added to these there is a draw inward, a pull deep within that seeks to liberate us into some unknown yet intense and intimate immensity reaching out around and above without end. This sense is created by the words being caught from a plane beyond the human : the rhythmic vibration no less than the stuff of significance is derived from an ampler consciousness and carries the actual thrill of it. If that plane were contacted and drawn upon all the time, poetry would lay bare the Spirit's

own speech wherein the nature of the mystical world is not something that fits ill, or by half, the shape and sound of language but makes one organically moving body with it. Simile and metaphor become then no dubious effort to suggest what seems to the mere mind a state of formless being that is outside the range of imagery : language with its various devices grows a natural mode of expressing the one yet manifold cosmic Divine as well as the archetypal Transcendent.

The mental energy and the life-force can both poetically catch fire when the Spirit presses upon them, a fine outburst of revealing figures is possible on these planes of consciousness if somehow a channel has been cleared between them and the Unknown till

> From cloud-zoned pinnacles of the secret Spirit
> Song falls precipitant in dizzying streams.

But in a Thompsonian sonority like that, the Spirit's accent is attuned to a force belonging to the human rather than the Superhuman : the sight and the movement are of the inspired imagination, they have not the profound ease and colossal freedom of a direct spiritual experience. More inward, more authentically swept with the true spiritual suggestion and resonance is the poetic soul of those two lines about mystical inspiration, by an Indian poet during his stay in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram :

> See me go from silence to deeper silence
> Song by song bird-marking a cloudless azure.

In rendering the process and the meaning of his music alive to us, the poet here does not take his sense of the Divine and proceed to make it concrete to himself by equating it with figures from Nature—"cloud-zoned pinnacles", "dizzying streams" ; he appears rather to intuit the Divine in a concrete way from the first and then proceed to envelop and permeate natural figures with that intuition. The secret Spirit is not felt through Nature so much as Nature is felt through the secret Spirit : that is why the vision-impact and the rhythm-movement bear some kind of largeness and directness that is more revelatory than an imaginative magnificence helping out mysticism.

An even more puissant largeness and directness should be the mystic's goal. In the just-quoted lines, haunted though they are by the mood of the In-world and the Over-world, there is yet something missing from the highest spiritual point of view. Aesthetically, they are faultless—so too are Thompson's lines ; mystically, their revelatory rapture is not altogether the sheer

substance of the Spirit thrown out in luminous speech. To get that substance and its direct disclosure, the poet must practise a deeper concentration, realise a keener concreteness of the Eternal and its thronged infinities. Above everything else, he must still all the vibrations of his ordinary being, no matter how grand or exquisite they may be, and fix himself on letting loose without any reshaping by those vibrations the pure rhythms of the wide and massive Divine such as the ancient Indian scriptures carry and in our own day Sri Aurobindo's recent work in which

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces
Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings ;
Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions
    Blaze in my spirit.

Slow my heart-beats' rhythm like a giant hammer's ;
Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway
Words that live not save upon Nature's summits,
    Ecstasy's chariots.

AMALKIRAN

MANDUKYA UPANISHAD

A COMMENTARY

IV

IN order to realise the fourfold Atman, the soul of man must be divinely able to possess the lower hemisphere. At present the ego-sense which is our first insistent experience hinders us from achieving with full wakefulness, in Space and Time, the divine status of our soul-existence. In Its spaceless and timeless being, Atman is always thus conscious but in Its frontal action here in self-conceptive extension and duration It puts the rest of Its consciousness behind as subliminal and supraliminal so that Its superficial or frontal action as the lower Brahman is unaware of It though all the while the latter exists and acts only by that ever-unimpaired Infinite. This power of absorbed concentration has been compared by Sri Aurobindo to the power of concentration in our normal mentality by which we absorb ourselves in a particular object and in a particular work and forget the integral ego in us which is really doing the work to be done. The integral ego itself, gross as well as subtle, is even such a self-forgetfulness—by the phenomenal superficies—of the divine nature of the individual soul. But the true soul is there behind this apparent absorption in the idea of being, force of being and form of being, in living touch with the innermost plenitudes of the All, and it enlightens gradually the circumscribed ego with the intuition of unity, universality and divinity, and leads it by Yoga to realise and manifest the fourfold consciousness which alone can put the individual in rapport with the universal on all the planes of being.

It has been contended that it is impossible for the individual soul to be conscious like Brahman because the individual and the universal co-exist up to the third state but are merged in the last, with the result that the soul becomes as good as extinct and is compelled to lose all consciousness of the world. But if Brahman is Atman there is no reason why extinction should be the consequence, provided the soul lets the memory of the supreme union percolate through all the layers of its being by an ever-increasing opening of the latter to the Highest and to the truth of manifestation which is behind their initial perversities. In the last verse of the Mandukya the same word

"Atman" is used to denote the true Self of the individual as well as the supreme Self of all, for the Essence which constitutes both is identical and by realising one's own Essence that of everything else is realised. But the Mandukya implies much more than a mere negation of extinction : it is of the greatest philosophic moment to note that when Atman is realised as the supreme Self of all there is implied an infinity of centres from which the supreme Self is experienced. For, if, as the Katha puts it, the Eternal is to be discerned by the wise as existing within their own Atman, and speaks[1] also of the one Purusha who resides within each man's Atman, then surely there is intended to be some shade of difference between the Atman of all and the Atman of each—a shade which is also evident when the Mundaka says[2] that the Atman of those who practise Yoga properly makes Brahman its dwelling place. In other words, the universal Atman is in each case of self-liberation experienced from an individual centre : the supreme Atman is the proverbial circle whose circumference is nowhere and centre everywhere. Just as the terms Vaiswanara, Taijasa and Prajna stand for both the macrocosmic and the microcosmic aspects, so also, when the ultimate universal reality is called Atman that term in its application to the individual connotes also the highest individuality. Such a position is no more impossible, simply because in the fourth state Atman is spoken of as "the One who is non-dual", than a concrete individual form of the universal objectivity and a subtle individual poise assumed by the universal subjectivity : it differs from them in one respect only—namely, that they in themselves, in their superficies, are states of the Ignorance while this, like the third state of a divine individual centre in tune with the universal divinity, is a condition of full Knowledge.

The supreme Bliss or Immortality is certainly a fulfilment[3] and not a denial of all that the individual soul is and desires. If complete mergence in the universal were the result, then it would be vain to speak of the "mortal putting on Immortality." The liberated Yogi must still carry implicit in his consciousness the sense of his liberation into the plenary Bliss; else self-liberation would become a contradiction in terms and hold no meaning for the human soul starting its self-discovery from its first ego-standpoint. For, after all it is the human soul that is liberated, Brahman himself having been always free in His universal aspect. To quote a well-known figure from the Mundaka Upanishad, when the river of the soul pours itself into Brahman it gains for good its essential Consciousness as Water and is no longer tyrannised over by the Name and Form of River; but still it is the river which has attained the

[1] II.4.(12). [2] III.2.(4).
[3] Taittirya Upanishad II. I. (2).

oceanic heart of essential Bliss and its experience of that Bliss does not lessen or efface the riverine water which was poured into the ocean, for otherwise there will be no real awareness of self-liberation and the putting on of Immortality by the mortal become impossible. In fact, Immortality is significant only if the once-deluded soul is led to discover through Yoga its highest counterpart conscious of Its own eternal Essence and Self, but at the same time is not annihilated as a distinct numerical entity. If we say that Brahman projects the individual and totally reabsorbs him, we knock all value out of self-liberation unless we add that it is the projected individual who experiences the so-called reabsorption or that Brahman re-experiences Himself from an individual point of view. "There must be then," as Sri Aurobindo insists, "some kind of reality of the individual soul as distinct from the Supreme even in the event of freedom and illumination." And since all process of spiritual becoming is, according to the Upanishads, a progressive discovery of what one already is in the depths of one's being, what we call Brahman must be a free and illumined state of multiple oneness.

It is exactly this view that the Mundaka takes in describing the supreme status. It speaks of the soul entering into Brahman, making Brahman its dwelling place, finding everywhere the Omnipresent and by self-union penetrating into the All. It does not at all mention extinction, dissolution, or self-effacing reabsorption; on the contrary it says in conclusion, as if to illumine fully the expressions already used : "The strivers after Truth, they who have made certain of the nature of things by the knowledge that is Vedanta and are purified in their being by the Yoga of renunciation, in their time of ultimate end become absolute and immortal and are released into Brahmaloka."[1] This verse harks back to an early reference[2] in the same Upanishad to the ineffectual efforts of those who hope to attain Brahmaloka permanently by charitable works and the external ceremonial of the Vedic cult.

But what precisely is Brahmaloka, the world of Brahman ? There seems to be several grades in it : the Prasna calls the world of the Sun Brahmaloka and the first reference in the Mundaka also speaks of it as a solar paradise. But "the highest infinite heaven" in which the true Yogi, according to the Kena,[3] "finds his foundation" if he has realised the secret doctrine is clearly the same ultimate status which is obtained when, as the Mundaka phrases it, the liberated soul passes right through the gates of the Sun and becomes at the time of death absolute and immortal by being released into Brahmaloka. So we must appreciate the ancient nuance between the Self in Its pure aspect and Its creative role as Brahma, the original of the first figure of the later

[1] VI.2. (15) [2] I.2.(5-7) [3] IV.9.

Puranic trinity : the secondary world of Brahman leading to the primary is the Supreme's poise as Brahma the Creator who is the Prajna of the Mandukya. Even the Brihadaranyaka confirms this idea of grades in the world of Brahman by calling the highest level of Brahmaloka the status of the highest Purusha; while in the Chhandogya[1] the Self is called the supreme and uncreated Brahmaloka which is attained by means of Yoga. But the term in question is unequivocally significant, in the Sanskrit language, of a status of conscious being in which the liberated souls enjoy an essential identity with Brahman without becoming merged in His universality.

We must not, however, imagine that these souls would thus be less than Brahman, for the category of magnitude has no bearing on the realm of essence: the Self can be smaller than a corn of rice, says Sandilya in the Chhandogya Upanishad, and yet greater than the whole world. It is really nothing less than what the Mundaka in a later verse calls "becoming Brahman by knowing Brahman", since the unobscured perception of the Many that the One has become Many in them is tantamount to perceiving that the multiplicity is but a varied deployment of their own essential unity. This is exactly as it should be, in accordance with the Upanishadic view of creation as only the self-projection of a transcendent Being in Its self-conceived conditions of Space and Time. It is essential Being which is essential Consciousness which again is essential Bliss—Sat-chit-ananda—dwelling in energy on Itself, Chit-tapas, to diffuse what is self-concentrated. Hence the highest concentration must hold the supernal principle or corresponding truth of multiplicity which supports and justifies the spatio-temporal activity which has sprung from it. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Taittirya should aver that in the principle of Ananda or Brahmic Bliss each individual has his counterpart of supreme individuality dynamic in time through the gnostic self of Vijnana and based transcendentally in the conscious being of Brahman,[2] so that what is called Brahman proves to be just the universal Being who contains and constitutes the highest Brahmaloka. It is a latter-day mistake to see the two as different; no text in the main Upanishads lends the least support to it, for it would contradict what the Mundaka calls "the knowledge that is Vedanta."

The Vedantic ideal, even like the Vedic, was not to lose oneself always in a sealed trance but to use the trance-state as a step towards making Sat-chit-ananda gradually the normal consciousness of life. The universal Life of which our waking consciousness is only "an individual universe of movement"[3] is no fatuity to be abandoned or an inexplicable bungling on the part

[1] VIII 4.13.15
[2] II. Chap. 5.
[3] Isha I.

of the Supreme, but "the manifest Brahman"[1]—Brahman who is Himself "the Life whose light becomes apparent in all existing things."[2] For our waking self has its inmost centre of truth in the creative Maya of Brahmic Bliss and our whole organic existence is but an effort of that Bliss to climb up through vitalised Matter and mentalised vitality and spiritualised mentality to its own integral harmony which expresses the pure spiritual substance and conscious energy through the process of an ultra-mental Law. In the word "Anandamaya" we have the Vedantic equivalent of the Gita's Para-Prakriti, the divine energy of the highest Purusha, Purushottama. And though it is true that the plenary manifestation of the Highest in the lowest was never so well accomplished in the days of the Upanishads by the Rishis as in the days of the Gita by the Charioteer of Kurukshetra, the ideal was none the less there, envisaged clearly enough to make them declare that Brahmaloka is verily here and now, its kingdom within the human heart,[3] which OM as a spirit of mind piloting the life and the body has set in Matter.[4] When all the knots that bind the heart are rent asunder, then man, even in the body of this birth, enjoys the Bliss of Immortality[5]; for after beholding, "bright and luminous in the inner body", the indivisible Spirit with the subtle eyes of the meditating heart[6], "the will in the thought may continuously remember what the motion of the mind turned inwards has succeeded in attaining."[7] All is unified in the Highest who is imperishable, says the Mundaka[8]; there the members of organic life discover their foundation and all these god-forms expressing themselves in mental, vital, and physical existence withdraw into their godheads and the self of Vijnana expands into the illimitable Atman. Then the soul, delivered from the disruptive ignorance of Name and Form, sees how That is both the higher and the lower being[9] and how in their deepmost truth Life is That and Speech is That and Mind is That only[10] and how the wise by reflective perception behold everywhere in the universe That which shines out as Delight and Immortality.[11] For "all is this eternal and Immortal Brahman. The Eternal is before us and the Eternal is behind us and to the south and to the north of us and above and below and extended everywhere. All this magnificent universe is nothing but the Eternal."[12]

[1] Isha I.
[2] Mundaka III.1,(4)
[3] *Chhandogya* VIII.1. (1-6).
[4] *Mundaka* VI.2.(6,8). [5] *Katha* II.3. (14,15).
[6] *Mundaka* III. 1. (5,7,8,9). [7] *Kena* IV, 3. [8] *Mundaka* III. 2, (7).
[9] *Mundaka* II. 2, (9)
[10] *Ibid.* (2).
[11] *Ibid.* (8).
[12] *Ibid.* (12)

But the supernal vision is not vouchsafed to the mortal if he fails to conform to the Law of the Supreme who has so set this world-riddle that without utter purity and consecration of the being the outward-going waking consciousness cannot be transformed nor suffused with a full perception of the higher Brahman who has become everything even in the lower Brahman. The subtle sight which fulfils the ideal of the Upanishads to see not only all existences in the Self but also the Self in all existences—that is to say, even in each individual universe of movement in the universal motion—cannot be developed until the mental consciousness which is man's ordinary experience is not transformed enough to be a pellucid image of the ultra-mental. Else the Yogi has to set his mind to sleep and withdraw into the Highest—a mode of escape which was accepted by all who were not prepared to cope with the rounded ideal of the original Vedanta and which by its later prevalence has been responsible for the current misconception that the Upanishads at the height of their inspiration advocate the theory that the individual is merged in the universal Brahman and that the Atman proper is a complete exclusion of the three other states. If the mental being is sufficiently opened to the divine Light and flooded by a splendour beyond it so that all its activity is initiated and guided from above, it would be possible to realise the fourfold simultaneity of a divine self-existence, individual and universal, such as is described by the Mandukya as the integral character of the Immutable whose name is OM. For then the mind and the Spirit would be in close harmony and the Yogi be able to realise not only the absolute value of the Infinite but also its translation into the derivative forms of it in the lower hemisphere. He would possess it in itself as well as in its downward orientation, as "That which remains unexpressed by the word but by which the word is expressed, That which thinks not by the mind but by which the mind is thought, That which sees not with the eye but by which one sees the eye's seeings, That which breathes not with the breath but by which the life-breath is led forward in its paths".[1] What is more, all the present means of experience would become to the best of their capacity channels of the supernal Idea or Truth which is behind each of them so that they might at least translate correctly what in its own fullness is realisable only in the language of the ultra-mental.

Thus the sense-action, both gross and subtle, would be raised to its highest intensity as well as holding-power, illumined with the true meaning of image and appearance, and taste the divine delight which hides behind all its multicoloured shock and reaction of aesthesis. The emotional nature would forget the blinding storm of its fitful waters and vibrate in a deep and sweet and

[1] *Kena* I. 4-8.

calm response to the call of the eternal Lover, realising how human relations are but a pallid and misguided, though provisionally justified, expressions of Nature's divine urge towards self-completion. The intelligence and will would be alchemised into dynamic inspiration, revelation and intuition, vivified by the infallible spontaneities of the Truth-consciousness, aware in their most detailed operations as in their most extensive gyrations of the spaceless and timeless infinite of Sat-chit-ananda. The way of this transmutation is marked out by the Isha, for it corresponds in the reverse order to the triple action of the Sun of Knowledge which receives the infinite light beyond, focuses the whole truth of the unmanifest into a dense concentration or seed-state of what is to be manifested and finally unrolls by creative ideation the Bliss of Brahman into a cosmic rhythm and harmony. The aspiring soul, therefore, must lay aside the glittering ignorance of its mentality and submit by Yoga to the supreme Seer in order that the rays of the Sun of Knowledge which are dispersed by the mind may be marshalled according to the law of the Truth-consciousness by which alone the habitual method of mental experience can be systematised and all its scattered radiations unified in the concentrated body of the gnostic Sun till at last a direct intercourse is established, through a transformed Taijasa, between Vaiswanara and Prajna, and the embodied soul of the individual is enabled to perceive through the massed glories of the Sun its own identity with the infinite beatitude of the highest Self. When even the waking self is able to feel its oneness with the Self of Ananda and utter the great cry of realisation, "The Purusha there and there, He am I !", then the universe will justify in the individual the original descent of the Infinite into Space and Time to realise in a progressive expression the perfect Consciousness of the Beyond. For the Truth and Immortality will be possessed and manifested in the human symbol made divine, and a complete fulfilment take place of the whole labour and rapture of Vedic and Vedantic spirituality, the immense effort of the ancient esoterics to unite in being with the one Godhead and forge in their nature, "as in a smithy", the multiple god-forms or perfect Vibhutis of His Ananda.

This translation of the whole human formula into that of the superman, in a most integral fashion made possible by a compassing of the ultra-mental gnosis as never before, is precisely the aim and end, explicitly avowed and pursued, of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. of the Supermind.

(*Concluded*)

Adhyetā

THE FOUNDATION-STONE

THE Integral Yoga far surpasses in value-power and efficacy all other systems of religious, occult, mystical or spiritual discipline because it is, in the very first instance, an existential attitude, a mode and way of being that determines all forms of individual becoming. Here the essential thing to consider is not *what* should be done, worship or prayer or meditation or service or study or concentration or penance or confession or breathing exercises or invocation or all of them, but *how* that which should be done has to be done. The action is not so important as the attitude that manifests in action. If the attitude is right, every action, even the most ordinary and insignificant one, will be right. To act what we are and to be what is our supreme possibility is the task, not to be what we act and to act what the Shastra or Scripture prescribes.

This is new, for so far the stress was on the form of action and it was held that it could and would determine the form of being. The attempting movement was from without inwards, the objective determining the subjective. The Integral Yoga moves in the opposite direction and for many this seems difficult to comprehend or even to appreciate. Too long and too strong the emphasis has been on behaviour, the form that was selected and given to the manifesting spirit without its having the possibility of a free individual and self-chosen form of manifestation. In the Integral Yoga it is the spirit itself that with an enormous power of possibility stands up right in the centre of our attention.

It is a central conversion that is demanded, the turning of the entirety of our being into another direction, not the adoption of a new faith, a new conception of existence, a different way of living and acting or all of them, though these may very well be consequences or symptoms of the essential change. No amount of self-imposed transfigurations of living, feeling, acting or thinking corresponds to this conversion which could be conceived of as the more-than-the-sum of all transfigurations possible. It is indeed a psychological—or, to be more accurate, a psycho-spiritual—rather than a religious process, essentially soul-subjective and possible without any perceptible outer alteration in the environment. The outer forms of life may continue apparently without any change. No ochre robe or shaven head, no monastery or temple,

no poverty or renunciation is required, only this inmost decision for the new form of being.

This makes the Integral Yoga the most practical, the most easily applicable and, above all, a truly integral system of human development. For it does not admit partial professions, half-hearted conducts or superficialities. Wherever these are found, the Integral Yoga has not been adopted. There may be an aspiration for it, a sincere desire to make it one's own, but, as long as the lever has not been turned, this way of Yoga is not lived. For this is its essential significance, that it demands integrity, completeness, wholeness. This may be difficult to achieve but it is important to keep it in mind in order not to deceive oneself.

JOBST MÜHLING

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo : Studies in the Light of His Thought by *M. P. Pandit.* Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry. Price Rs. 4.0.0. Pp. 247.

This fascinating collection of essays, reviews and comments of the author ranges over a wide field covering subjects as far apart as Sri Ramakrishna and Communism on the one hand and on the other Vedic poetry and such abstruse subjects as the theories of human progress.

The book comprises six sections. The first deals with some personal accounts of Sri Aurobindo which throw a revealing light on the multi-faceted personality of the Master. The incidents have been very selectively culled, all pointing to the future spiritual pioneer who hewed the paths of Immortality and who by the embodiment of the Supreme Truth-Consciousness paved the way for the birth of the Divine Humanity.

In the second section there are five articles: two on the *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* and on *The Problem of Rebirth* by Sri Aurobindo, two on publications by a pair of disciples of Sri Aurobindo, and one in answer to a philosophical critic. The article on Rebirth will be of particular interest to non-Hindu readers because, though the theory of metempsychosis has been propounded elsewhere than India, it has never been set forth in such a way that it should carry conviction to the rational and scientific mind. Mr. Pandit has compressed the whole subject in a few pages and developed it methodically and with a comprehensive sweep so that it is presented in all its bearings. The first thing to note is that Rebirth in this view is not merely an endless chain of rewards and punishments ; it has a direction and a goal. The author observes, "Rebirth is the process and Karma the means by which the soul works out its possibilities. Each birth is a step in advance of the previous ; the last birth provides the material and prepares for the next. The soul-personality put forward in Nature by the spirit behind moves from birth to birth taking on fresh bodies when the old ones cease to be serviceable for its purpose." The author rightly argues in this connection that the evolution of the soul cannot be in the ethical direction alone. It is not that each birth will find us more virtuous according to the ever-shifting standards of moral conduct that humanity imposes with an absoluteness. "Again, *good* and *bad* are not the only values in life. There are other values of Knowledge, of Power, of Beauty etc.

The various outputs of energies in each of these fields demand their own fulfilment irrespective of their goodness or badness from the standpoint of the moralist and the result depends on which of them has the greatest potency to effectuate itself."

The author is well-known for his contributions in the field of Vedic and Upanishadic studies. His knowledge of Sanskrit enables him to support his thesis by the luminous ancient lore of Indian seers. He has also extensively studied European philosophy and is abreast of the latest trends in every field and clearly sees how the solution of the problems of human life lies in the harmonious coalescence of the Eastern spiritual realizations with Western mental and material achievements which are no less astounding. "A fruitful reconciliation of the Truth of the Spirit and the claim of Matter (and Life) resulting in a mutual enrichment eventually culminating in the marriage of Heaven and Earth would appear to be the goal towards which Nature is labouring and the one satisfying solution to this many-sided problem. That is the glorious wedlock which has been dreamt of by the mystics of every land, of every age."

'The Theories of Human Progress' is an article of more than 20 pages in length. It takes into account and adumbrates almost every theory about the meaning of human progress and shows how each one has an element of truth but is infected with the ubiquitious failure of the human mind to see things steadily and see them whole. The economic, the theological and occult and spiritual theories of human progress have all been assigned their right places in this synthetic view. Incidentally because of the writer's gift of perspicacity we gain a good deal of knowledge about the theories that he examines with justice and warm understanding.

The reviews are specially interesting for they give us an insight into a vast storehouse of knowledge and we find ourselves enriched not only by the author's own point of view on the various subjects but by the significant extracts from the books reviewed.

The get-up and the printing of the book make it doubly attractive and we hope that it will serve as a useful stepping-stone for the study of Sri Aurobindo's own works.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

IS OUR CHRONOLOGY FOR ANCIENT INDIA CORRECT?

Some Criticisms and Suggestions

12

OBVIOUSLY the picture we have inferred of Xandrames from the Greek annals does not tally at all in its essentials with what we know of the Nanda dynasty preceding the first Maurya. All Indian traditions make the Nandas possess a large empire with Magadha as its centre. The Puranas[1] say with one voice that Mahapadma Nanda conquered the following Kshatriya dynasties : Aikshvākus, Pañchālas, Kāśīs, Haihayas, Kalingas, Aśmakas, Kurus, Maithilas, Śūrasenas and Vītihotras : he is said to have brought everything in India under one regnal "umbrella." And during the reign of his eight sons there is no loss of any part of the empire. So it is difficult to equate any member of the Nanda family with a king like Xandrames or Agrammes who, though powerful, is yet the master of a limited dominion mostly along the course of the Ganges to the west of the Prasii and therefore to the west of Magadha and perhaps extending eastward over a part of Magadha but excluding Pāṭaliputra.

But suppose we waive this dissimilarity : can we then bring the Indian stories into accord with the Greek ? A common factor is that, like Xandrames or Agrammes, the Puranic Nandas are of low origin. A still closer resemblance seems suggested by the Jain tradition in the *Avaśyaka Sūtra*[2] where the first Nanda is described as begotten of a barber. Hemachandra's *Pariśishtaparvan*[3] makes him the son of a barber by a courtezan. But when we get impressed by these correspondences we must not forget discrepancies. Mookerji[4] has noted : "Buddhist tradition does not impute any base origin to the Nandas and thus runs counter to the Brahminical and Jain traditions.... The worst infamy which Buddhist tradition recoids against these Nandas is that they were originally outlaws and robbers. The *Mahābodhivaṁsa* describes the Nanda kings as *chorapubbas*, 'the dacoits of old'." The *Mahāvamsatīkā* also speaks of them as being *aññātakula*, "of unknown lineage",

[1] Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, p. 56.
[2] p. 693.
[3] VIII, 230.
[4] *Op. cit.*, pp. 32-3.

but no specific base origin is given. In the Buddhist accounts the first Nanda just teams up with robbers at an early stage of his life. Even in the *Pariśishta-parvan*[1] the Nanda king preceding Chandragupta Maurya claims after his deposition a certain right possible only to a Kshatriya and the claim is conceded. The famous Indian drama *Mudrārākshasa*[2] by which our scholars set considerable store regards the Nandas as *prathita-kulajāh*, "of illustrious birth", or *uchchairavijanam*, "of high birth".

Further, neither Buddhist nor Jain accounts connect the father of the Nandas with a love-intrigue with the queen of the preceding king. The Puranas come nearest to such intrigue by making Mahapadma the son of the Sunga king Mahanandin by a Sudra woman. But here it is the mother instead of the father who is of mean origin. And there is no question of the queen conspiring with a lover and murdering her husband and bringing to the throne her son by that lover. Mahapadma comes to the throne rightfully and normally. And when the Buddhist account describes the Nandas as violently taking Magadha, it is by open dacoity from outside the royal circle and not by a secret conspiracy with an enamoured queen.

Thus even in the midst of resemblances there are marked differences and the balance does not tilt in favour of the former. The sole thing that stands out persuasively is the word "barber" in just two statements. But here too we meet with an ambiguity. There are nine Nandas in all: even the *Avaśyaka Sūtra*[3] knows of them. It is only the first who is called the son of a barber. Yet it is not he who can be deemed Xandrames or Agrammes. The ninth Nanda immediately preceding Chandragupta Maurya is our man. He is nowhere spoken of as a barber's son. He is endowed with a mean and avaricious disposition, but the one outstandingly suggestive feature is omitted. Somehow, the eldest Nanda alone is singled out for it. The Puranas, making no mention of any barber but merely a Sudra wife of king Mahanandin, offer us only eight Nandas as brothers, the Nanda named Mahapadma being, as we have already said, their father. The barber-parentage has no bearing here and even if it held for Mahapadma it directly would not for the last of his sons who ruled before Chandragupta Maurya. Hence the term "barber" in the Indian records seems to have no clinching value. Perhaps its exclusive occurrence in the Jain books means that it is not intended to be accepted literally. We may remember Barua's remark[4] : "The barber story is almost proverbial in the ancient royal tradition of India. When a reigning monarch was found

[1] VIII, 320.
[2] VI, 6.
[3] P. 693.
[4] *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, p. 47.

stingy in the payment of rewards or in making gifts, he was taken to be a barber's son."

Even the mean and avaricious disposition of the Nandas is not unequivocally asserted in our literature. The *Mahāvamsatīkā* which speaks of the last of them being "addicted to hoarding treasure" says that towards the time when he was dethroned "he, instead of any more hoarding wealth, was bent upon spending it in charities which he organised through the machinery of an institution called *Dānaśālā* administered by a Samgha whose President was to be a Brahman."[1]

The Buddhist *Mañjuśri-mūlakalpa*[2] has the same charities but they are set in a entirely different story. This book knows of no nine Nandas. It has only one single Nanda who gained the throne from a position of the prime minister, as if by a magical process, and who was a pious and sagacious man, a Buddhist who was yet a patron of Brahmans. This character is as far away as can be from the Greek Xandrames or Agrammes.

Our historians claim that the name Agrammes seems to correspond to a term which we can derive from the name of the first of the nine Nanda brothers mentioned by Buddhist tradition. All the names, as given in the *Mahābodhivaṁsa*, are : (1) Ugrasena (2) Paṇḍuka (3)Paṇḍugati (4) Bhūtapalā (5) Rāshṭrapāla (6) Govishāṇaka (7) Daśasiddhaka (8) Kaivarta and (9) Dhana.[3] Evidently there is nothing here to answer to Agrammes. But Raychaudhuri[4] has ingeniously proposed that the Sanskrit patronymic "Augrasainya", derivable from Ugrasena and meaning "Son of Ugrasena", is the Indian original of the name preserved by the Greeks. But it is difficult to see how Ugrasena who is clearly called the eldest brother among the Nanda brothers can give rise to a term which clearly makes him the father of the rest of them. "Augrasainya" is a sheer misnomer in the context in which alone the name Ugrasena occurs. Besides, it has, in the second part of it, even no correspondence with Agrammes. What perhaps goes most against it is the baselessness of the belief underlying its formation—namely, that Agrammes is the original name which afterwards got corrupted into Xandrames. Agrammes occurs in Curtius, a writer of the first century A.D., whereas Xandrames occurs in Diodorus who belongs to the first century B.C. Chronologically, there can be no doubt that Agrammes is a corruption of Xandrames. And phonetically there are two solid reasons to think the same. First, the sound-relation between it and Xandrames is akin to that between Androcottus and Sandrocottus : Sandrocottus (men-

[1] *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, pp. 33-4.
[2] Barua, *Op. cit.*, p. 43.
[3] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 31.
[4] *The Political History of Ancient India*, p. 15.

tioned by Strabo in the 1st century B.C.) is not only anterior in time to Androcottus (mentioned by Plutarch in the 1st century A.D.) but illustrates by its change into the latter a well-known tendency with Indian names to get their initial S or other allied sound dropped in their Greek versions (*e.g.* Sindhu= Indus) or else replaced by H (*e.g.* Kshudraka = Hydrakes). The change from Xandrames to Agrammes is nothing unnatural so far as the opening letter is concerned, and with regard to the rest the whole alteration becomes natural if we assume an intermediate form now lost : Andrames. Secondly, Xandrames seems indubitably the Greek form of a Sanskrit name like Chandramas: Max Muller[1] noted the likely equivalence as long ago as 1859 and F.W.Thomas in the *Cambridge History*[2] asserts it unhesitatingly. There is no Sanskrit original of Agrammes, which can be similarly pointed out : in fact, as Mankad[3] remarks, there is no possible original with, at the same time, a beginning like "Agra" and an ending that answers to "mmes". So, from the phonetic no less than the chronological angle, we have to ignore Agrammes and take only Xandrames into consideration. In this we are supported by the universal Indian practice of using a king's personal name : "no king", writes Mankad[4], "is yet known to have been, in official references, called by his patronymic." All arguments based on Agrammes are fallacious.

The only point that may at all be urged in this context is the one offered by Thomas[5] who, after equating Xandrames with Chandramas, suggests that Dhana was merely the nickname of the last Nanda and that Chandramas was his real name. Dhana may have been a nickname expressive of the enormous wealth of the Nandas,[6] but no text hints this nature of it. And the second part of Thomas's suggestion is absolute guess-work, a pure supposition for which not an iota of plausibility can be found in any Indian tradition—Brahminical, Buddhist or Jain. It recommends itself to nobody except those who have already made up their minds that Xandrames must be the last Nanda. In the framework of the current hypothesis about Sandrocottus, Xandrames remains unexplained.

In connection with that hypothesis in its bearing on Xandrames and his father we must finally draw attention to the utter disparity between, on the one hand, the small number these make and, on the other, the large number constituted by the Nandas. The two figures of the Greek accounts cannot

[1] *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 143.
[2] I, p. 469.
[3] *Puranic Chronology*, p. 255.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 254.
[5] *Op. cit.*, I, p. 469.
[6] Barua, *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, Part I, p. 43.

tally even approximately with the nine of the Indian stories. We may plead : "The Indian stories, when they talk of a father and eight sons, or of nine sons with an unnamed father, give no more than two generations, just like the Greek accounts : so the time-factor is identical and we should not let the mere largeness of number tell." Yes, the time-factor may not be an obstacle, but Xandrames of the Greeks is too evidently a single individual to do duty for a whole collection of brothers. If Xandrames is taken, as he must, to be a single individual, he has to be the last of the nine Nandas and then we have no correspondence with the Greek annals which know of just one predecessor and have nothing to say about the remaining seven. Nor can we argue that when Plutarch refers to "the kings of the Gandaritai and the Praisiai" he implies several Nandas ruling jointly; for actually the Nandas have been said to rule "one after another according to seniority".[1] And if we do argue against this manner of ruling and take Plutarch to mean several Nandas together on the throne with Xandrames as one of them we make him completely contradict both Diodorus and Curtius who mention no more than one king. Even to interpret Plutarch in terms of successive ruling by so many members of the dynasty to which Xandrames belongs is to set up a serious contradiction to Diodorus and Curtius. A reconcilement of Diodorus and Curtius with Plutarch has to be achieved, but it can never be done by reading the nine Nandas into Plutarch's plural. The Greeks have no room for them anywhere.

Only in the Kashmiri tradition, as recorded in two Sanskrit works dated by our historians as late as the eleventh century A.D., the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the *Brihatkathāmañjarī*, do we have two Nandas instead of nine : (1) *Pūrva*-Nanda, who is called the father of Chandragupta, (2) *Yoga*-Nanda, father of Hiranyagupta or Harigupta. Mookerji[2] says that the relation between these two Nandas is not specified and no connection is asserted between them; nor is any link indicated between them and the nine Nandas known from Brahminical, Buddhist and Jain sources. Mookerji further remarks : "It is also not stated whether *Pūrva*-Nanda was even a prince. We are only told that the second Nanda or *Yoga*-Nanda was a king who succumbed to the *krityā* or magical spell practised against his life by Chanakya who installed Chandragupta as king in his place. This Nanda is also stated to be a *Śūdra*, and to have his camp at Ayodhya." Here, except for the Nandas being two, we have no notable correspondence with the Greek version : there is too much ambiguity and the central need of some correspondence to the name Xandrames is unsatisfied. Even some approximation to the name Agrammes is impossible

[1] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 132.
[2] *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, p. 21.

here. None of our historians accept the Kashmiri tradition, believing that they have found better substance elsewhere.

They are perhaps right inasmuch as the Nandas are concerned, but totally in error if they imagine that elsewhere they have found anything superior to it for the task of showing Xandrames to be a Nanda. All the arguments we have examined are equally inadequate on the whole. And the extra argument built for the Nanda dynasty on a statement in Bana's *Harshacharita*, a work which our historians place nearly a thousand years later than the Nandas is no better. Bana says that the king named Kakavarni Saisunaga was killed by a dagger thrust into his throat.[1] Now our historians set up in effect the following train of thought :[2] "The Puranic Kakavarna about whom Bana has made his statement is probably the Kalasoka whom the Buddhist books make the son and successor of Sisunaga. This Kalasoka had, according to the *Mahāvamsa*, ten sons who ruled, in all likelihood jointly, for a period of ten years. These are named in the *Mahābodhivamsa* and include Nandivardhana who is counted by the Puranas as the ninth king among the ten of the Saisunaga dynasty. The Puranas add another king, Mahanandin the father of Mahapadma Nanda, but we doubt his existence unless we suppose him to be another of Kalasoka's ten sons. The murderer of Kalasoka or Kakavarna Saisunaga was possibly the founder of the next dynasty—that of the Nandas. And his ten sons look very much like 'the young princes' whom Curtius reports the father of Agrammes to have slain some time after slaying the old king."

A more unconvincing argument can hardly be imagined. Not only is it studded with conjectures : it is also full of an arbitrary picking and choosing and ends with a huge invention. Bana, using the Puranic name Kakavarna, had obviously the Puranic account as his background and if he said that Kakavarna was murdered he referred to the second king in the Puranic list, between whom and the Nandas the Puranas put eight successive kings[3] including Bimbisara and Ajatashatru who were contemporaneous with Buddha. If the one who came after Kakavarna killed him, it was his son Kshemadharman[4]: Bana could never have had the Nandas in mind. We are plucking a story out of its Puranic context and thrusting it into the Buddhist, even though the latter has not the least hint of it. The fact that one Buddhist work, the *Asokāvadāna*, mentions Kakavarna instead of Kalasoka does not alter the story's background in Bana. Further, the statement about Kakavarni Saisunaga's mysterious

[1] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 30.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 19
[4] *Ibid.*

death occurs in a somewhat obscure passage where Bana talks of this king's dealings with the Yavanas beyond India's north-west frontiers. Bhandarkar has discussed it at some length in the first volume of *Indian Culture*[1] and there is absolutely no implication in it of any Nanda. It is worth glancing at the relevant parts of his treatment so that the usual assumptions may be dispelled for good.

According to Bhandarkar, the *Harshacharita* text, in the light of Sankararya's commentary, may be taken to mean: "Kakavarna, son of Sisunaga, had conquered a Yavana king and received from him, as present, some Yavana artificers who constructed an aerial car for him. This conveyance he used to help his lascivious courses. One day while his car was being so driven, the Yavana servants carried him away to their own country and landed him in the vicinity of Nagara where they killed him." Then Bhandarkar discusses the word "Nagara" in the text. Does it signify the name of a particular town or is it any town? Bhandarkar, taking the Yavanas into consideration, identifies the city with the well-known Nagar along the Kabul river. No Nanda is at any stage on the scene.

Lastly, even Bana's story, though it mentions Kakavarna's death, has not the slightest pointer towards the slaughter of Kakavarna's offspring. Even if Kakavarna be transposed to a Buddhist context and identified with Kalasoka, there is nothing whatsoever to warrant the idea of anybody murdering Kalasoka's ten sons in the manner in which the father of Agrammes slew the old king's children. Sheer preconception and caprice are at play throughout the entire argument.

We should also dismiss as capricious the emendation made by von Gutschmid of a certain word in Justin's text. In the sentence where Justin says that Sandrocottus, by his insolent behaviour, offended Alexander, the German scholar has ingeniously proposed to replace the Latin accusative form "Alexandrum" by "Nandrum". The ingenuity seeks to establish at one stroke what his colleagues toil elaborately after and it has been welcomed in several quarters. However, Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta,[2] though subscribing to the current theory about Sandrocottus, frown at it rather severely: "The visit to the Macedonian king is referred to by Plutarch as well as Justin, but, strange to say, some modern writers emend the text of Justin and propose to read 'Nandrum' (Nanda) in place of 'Alexandrum' (Alexander). Such conjectural emendations are hardly justified. They mislead the unwary student of Mauryan antiquities." No impartial historian can disagree with the judgment.

[1] Pp. 16-18.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p.

To sum up : every part of the whole business of making Xandrames a Nanda is a hopeless failure. With such a result, can we ever hope to equate the next king, Sandrocottus, with Chandragupta Maurya ?

13

As regards Sandrocottus and Chandragupta of the Maurya dynasty we have to admit the latter's name to be like the one immortalised by the Greeks and his capital Pataliputra to be certainly the original of Palibothra, the chief city of the Prasii. But as another Chandragupta has been pointed out by us and as Pataliputra is the capital also associated with him, the two initial correspondences are far from being decisive. They have to be supported by additional ones.

It would be unfair to ask for every detail about the Sandrocottus of our historians to be matched by the incidents we know of in Chandragupta Maurya's life. We must not expect Sandrocottus's dealings with Alexander to be found in Indian records. Basham[1] has well said about the Macedonian's exploits : "The little kingdoms and tribes of the North-west were disorganised and overthrown, but Alexander made so small an impression upon India that in the whole of her surviving ancient literature there is no reference to him." All we may hope for is some general reference to the Indus region and its peoples, a reference implying Chandragupta's Maurya's overlordship. Have we such a reference in the accounts about Chandragupta ? The *Mahāvamsatīkā* informs us that on the completion of his education at Taxila, he set out for collecting recruits from different localities. The mention of Taxila may lead us to surmise that the Punjab was the main recruiting field ; but the army is said to have been collected for the wresting of Magadha from the Nandas : there is no pointer towards rule of the Indus region.

The drama *Mudrārākshasa*, dated at least seven hundred years after the first Maurya, speaks of his alliance with the Himalayan king Parvataka. The Jain work *Pariśishtaparvan* does the same. The dramatic piece adds[2] that the Himalayan alliance provided Chandragupta with a composite army made up of Sakas, Yavanas, Kiratas, Kambojas, Parasikas and Balhikas. But this list which is merely the traditional Indian one of indigenous tribes that by neglecting Vedic rites and usages became *Mlechchas* and went to live outside the Aryan fold gives us no hint about any mastery by Chandragupta over the

[1] *The Wonder that was India*, p. 49-50.
[2] II, 12.

Indus-region and is again connected solely with his campaign against Magadha. So even the minimum expectation we may entertain cannot be said to be really fulfilled.

Part of the list and part of the names of some other peoples the *Mudrārākshasa* involves in the Magadhan campaign causes a bit of embarassment to our historians. For, over and above the Sakas the Hunas are included, both of whom, in the current view, "appear in Indian history much later than the time of Chandragupta" and whose inclusion therefore "unfortunately affects the value of *Mudrārākshasa* as a source of history."

However that may be, the *Mudrārākshasa* is of no help to the picture we require of the first Maurya. Perhaps the only feature in it which may hold our attention for a second is the name Parvataka of the Himalayan prince. F. W. Thomas suggests that this Parvataka was perhaps the same person as king Porus of the Greeks. Mookerji endorses Thomas : "The suggestion is quite plausible, considering what a large place Porus had filled in the politics of his country in his time, so that no adventure in that region could be undertaken without enlisting his support." We are not carried much further by such props : they improve no whit the situation we need for our main character and they themselves are hardly untouched by fancifulness.

Can we at least say that Chandragupta figures as a great soldier in the Magadhan campaign ? All Greek accounts paint Sandrocottus as a mighty warrior, a hero in his own rights, one whose strong arm was felt not only by the Indus-region but also by the whole of India. Now, the one outstanding fact about Chandragupta Maurya is that he was an instrument in the hands of a Machiavellain fanatic of a Brahmin, Chanakya or Kautilya. Writes Mookerji[1] : "The Brahmanical traditions regard Kautilya (*alias* Chanakya), rather than Chandragupta, as the chief actor in the great drama which ended in the extermination of the Nandas. The Puranas credit Chanakya with having destroyed the Nandas and annointed Chandragupta as king. The same view is reflected in *Kautīlya Arthaśastra* and other treatises in ancient India. In the drama *Mudrārākshasa*, the figure of Chandragupta is almost cast into the shade by the brilliant and masterful personality of Chanakya. Stories are also told of the insult offered by the Nanda king to Chanakya and the grim resolve of the latter to uproot the royal dynasty; how he moved about in search of a suitable means to accomplish his ends and at last discovered Chandragupta and made use of him for this purpose." Barua[2] remarks : "With regard to the fall of the last Nanda king...the *Mahāvaṁsa* and its *tīkā* on the one hand, and the

[1] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 59-60.
[2] *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, pp. 43-44.

Puranas on the other show a complete agreement in so far as they attribute it to the machination of the Brahman named Kautilya-Chanakya. The *Mūlakalpa* alone suggests that the fall of the Nanda king was due to the alienation of the feeling of the whole body of ministers inadvertently caused by him. The tradition of extermination of the Nanda dynasty by Vishnugupta-Kautilya is met with in the concluding verse of the *Kautīlya Arthaśastra,* the opening verses of the *Kāmandakīya Nītiśara,* as well as Viśakhadatta's *Mudrā-rākshasa* and the *Mūlakalpa.*" The heroic stature of Sandrocottus the conqueror is utterly absent in Chandragupta Maurya.

The only connection traced between Sandrocottus and Chanakya-Kautilya is a flimsy and fanciful one which could acquire some little meaning only if there was a corpus of other evidence in favour of Chandragupta's identification with Sandrocottus. Indian tradition has it that Chanakya, after being insulted by the Nanda, repaired to the Vindhya forest and there met Chandragupta. "Greek and Latin writers", we are told,[1] "do not mention Kauṭilya but allude to Chandragupta's encounter with a lion and an elephant, which accords well with his residence in the Vindhyan wilds."

In the actual campaign inspired by Chanakya against Magadha we find in Chandragupta a most immature soldier. To quote Mookerji[2] again : "The *Mahāvamsatīkā* tells a story about the initial mistake of his campaigns. The mother of a boy, eating the centre of a cake (*chāpāti*) and throwing away the crust, compares his conduct to 'Chandragupta's attack on the kingdom'. The Jain tradition similarly compares the advance of Chandragupta to a child putting his finger into the middle of a hot pie, instead of starting from the edge which is cool. All this explains how Chandragupta, without beginning from the frontiers, and taking the towns in order as he passed, invaded the heart of the country, only to find that his army was 'surrounded and destroyed'. But Buddhist tradition ascribes to him another error of strategy. This time he commenced operations from the frontiers and conquered many *rashtras* and *janapadas* on the way, but failed to post garrisons to hold his conquests so as to secure his rear which was later attacked. Then the proper course dawned on him. He besieged Pātaliputra and killed Dhana Nanda." Surely this blunderer cannot be the soldier whom the Greeks themselves admired as the liberator of India from foreign yoke, with whom Seleucus Nicator came to almost abject terms including even a daughter for marriage and whom Plutarch described as overrunning and subduing the entire country.

Here we may be threatened with gagging by the argument : "Asoka's inscriptions credit him with only one conquest—namely, of Kalinga. But the

[1] Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta, *An Advanced History of India,* p. 98.

[2] *The Age of Imperial Unity* p. 59.

geographical distribution of these inscriptions as well as their internal evidence shows that his empire was vast. As his father is not known as a conqueror his grandfather Chandragupta must have created it. Some Tamil texts refer to an invasion of the South led by the people called the 'Vamba Moriyar' or the Maurya upstarts. The Mauryas are reported to have advanced as far as the Podiyil Hill in the Tinnevelly District, passing from Konkan through the hills north of Cannanore and the kingdom of Kongu (Coimbatore) on their way. The epithet 'upstarts' suggests that the Tamil poets referred to Chandragupta's times. Then there is the inscription of Rudradaman I at Junagarh declaring that Saurashtra was ruled in Chandragupta's times by a provincial governor of this Maurya king. An Asokan inscription discovered at Sopara in modern Thana District proves that this region too was a Mauryan province acquired under Chandragupta."

We need not refuse to be impressed by Saurashtra and by Sopara and some other locations of Asoka's edicts. But the picture is not as glowing as it looks. Kalinga, as we know from the Puranas if not also from Kharavela's Hathigumpha inscription, was already a part of the empire Chandragupta won from the Nandas : how is it then that Asoka had to reconquer it ? Either Chandragupta himself or his son Bindusara must have lost it. The conquest of South India up to the Tinnevelly District is a doubtful affair. The very phrase "Maurya upstarts" seems to indicate a family fairly advanced and not just begun : the plural is otherwise inexplicable. If the imperial Mauryas had anything to do with the achievement, it may be the successors of Chandragupta. And they are likely to be neither Bindusara nor Asoka, for, as Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta[1] tell us, "the southern frontier of the Maurya empire in the days of Asoka...did not extend beyond the Chitaldrug district of Mysore, and the Pandya realm which included the Tinnevely district is referred to in the edicts of that emperor as a frontier kingdom." If Chandragupta actually acquired this district, he or his son must have withdrawn from it very soon. Even the association of its conquest with any of the imperial Mauryas is not definite. Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta[2] observe : "The achievement is attributed by certain scholars to the Mauryas of the Konkan who belong to a much later date."

The usual claim that except for Kalinga no territorial acquisition can be attributed to Asoka because he has not mentioned it is hardly unchallengeable if Asoka is considered the grandson of Sandrocottus. Take the case of the Andhra nation. In Rock Edict XIII it is distinctly mentioned in the list of subordinate peoples that lived in the dominions of the King. But in the time

[1] *An Advanced History of India*, p. 101.
[2] *Ibid.*

of Sandrocottus the Andhras were an independent people, though perhaps not outside his suzerainty. Pliny (1st century A.D.)[1] who based himself on Megasthenes, the ambassador at the court of Sandrocottus, speaks of a powerful King of the Andhra country possessing 30 fortified towns as well as an army of 100,000 infantry, 2000 cavalry and 1000 elephants. As Bindusara is not known as a conqueror, either Asoka took possession of the Andhra country without mentioning the conquest in his edicts or else Megasthenes and Pliny were talking of times quite other than those of Asoka's grandfather. That is to say, either all the parts of Asoka's empire beyond what was inherited from the Nandas need not have been acquired by Chandragupta or else Chandragupta was not Sandrocottus.

There is also the question of the Ganges-delta, what is now called Lower Bengal. Did this part of India fall within the conquests of Chandragupta? We know for certain from Megasthenes as reported by Pliny that the whole extent of the course of the Ganges was ruled over by the Prasii under Sandrocottus: Sandrocottus therefore was master of the Ganges-delta. But, if we go by what we know of Asoka's empire, we cannot help doubting Chandragupta's possession of it. The Pali Chronicles and the *Samanta-pāsādikā*, as Barua[2] tells us, include in Asoka's domain proper the port of Tamralipti. Also, Hiuen Tsang (to quote Barua[3]) "was an eye-witness to the existence of four stūpas built by Asoka near the chief town of each of the four divisions of Bengal." However, Barua[4] adds: "Fa-hian, too, stayed for a long time at Tāmralipti, but he has to say nothing about any monument of Asoka's to be seen there. Thus the testimony of the later Chinese Pilgrim lacks corroboration from the itinerary of the earlier visitor." Barua[5] shows, by considering another testimony of Hiuen Tsang, the lack of corroboration to be still more significant: "Chola and Drāvida, where too the pilgrim saw the stupas of Aśoka, cannot be included in Aśoka's empire. The pilgrim's Chola and Drāvida constituted together the territory of the Cholas, better the Cholas and Pāndyas, which lay, according to R. E. II and R. E. XIII, outside Aśoka's empire." Hiuen Tsang is here proved incorrect about the location of stupas. Barua's conclusion[6]—rather on the temperate side—is that in the absence of any inscription of Asoka throwing light on the subject the matter must remain in doubt. If Chandragupta, like Sandrocottus, had been in possession of the Ganges-delta, the high uncertainty about the inclusion of this region in Asoka's empire would never have arisen.

1 *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 194.
2 *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, Part I, p. 65.
3 *Ibid.*
4 *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 106.
6 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Even on the West the empire of Asoka does not seem to have extended beyond Jalalabad where an inscription of his in Aramaic is said to have been found. Jalalabad is pretty far from Herat where the empire of Antiochus, according to Greek accounts, must have stopped after Seleucus Nicator had ceded Paropanisadae, Aria, Arachosia and Gedrosia to Sandrocottus. No inscription of Asoka's outside Jalalabad has been discovered in all the region Sandrocottus got from Seleucus. Nor is there any indication in Asoka's inscriptions that he was sovereign over this territory. The farthest city to the west mentioned by him is Takshasila in Gandhara. And as the Kambojas and Yonas are the only tribes he sets to the north-west or the west, the trans-Indus territory of Sandrocottus down to Baluchistan (Gedrosia) appears to have been outside the empire Asoka inherited from Chandragupta.

So far none of the arguments for the first Maurya have amounted to anything. Perhaps the one point in favour of it is that Taxila which is connected with Chandragupta is also connected with Alexander. The former's education there for seven or eight years is taken by Mookerji to prove the truth of Plutarch's interesting statement that Sandrocottus as a youth had seen Alexander in the course of his campaigning in the Punjab. "It is possible", says Mookerji,[1] "for a youth of the locality who must have sought an interview with the greatest military leader of the times for his own education as a military student." But the vicinity of Taxila or even the whole of the Punjab as the scene of a meeting between Sandrocottus and Alexander is not directly suggested by the Greek accounts. The story which Plutarch[2] relates of Sandrocottus speaking to Alexander about the then-king "who was hated and despised by his subjects" refers to the west bank of the Ganges which Plutarch considers the furthest point of Alexander's march. Plutarch is of course historically incorrect, for Alexander never reached the Ganges, but as he has put Alexander far away from Taxila we cannot say that his account supports Mookerji's idea of Sandrocottus interviewing Alexander during the latter's campaign in the Punjab. Nor can the historical fact of Alexander's halt at the Beas rather than at the Ganges help the idea : Diodorus and Curtius, who alone name the king who was hated and despised, talk of a great desert lying immediately between Alexander and the Ganges where Xandrames was reported to be waiting for him, whereas beyond the Beas was, as Arrian[3] tells us, fertile country. The desert was considerably to the south of the Beas and fairly far from Taxila, and Alexander must have been nearer Sind than the Punjab to have it as the immediate barrier between him and the Ganges. Justin who also mentions the meeting with Alexander

[1] *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, p. 28.
[2] *Lives*, Vol II, p. 518-519 (Everyman's Edition, 1929).
[3] *The Anabasis of Alexander*, Book XXIV, p. 284 (Chinnock's translation).

pictures Sandrocottus as being without a throne at the time and thus makes the time identical with the one in Plutarch when Sandrocottus could speak of the hated then-king on the east bank of the Ganges. Hence Justin's Sandrocottus seems to have interviewed Alexander in the last part of the latter's stay in India. In other words, it must have been during his passage through the southern part of the Indus-region, somewhere again in Sind, before his march homeward through Baluchistan. If such is the case, Chandragupta's stay at Taxila loses most of its significance for the historical imagination. Even otherwise, this stay creates only a vague presumption which would become truly significant only if arguments for his contemporaneity with Alexander are already valid.

Next, what shall we say of the phrase, "born in humble life", which we find in the Greek stories ? Strictly speaking, it should denote not only a commoner with no royal blood in him, but one belonging to a fairly low social status. Yet the man should have no taint of illegitimacy like Xandrames and the social status has to be above that of a barber like the father of Xandrames, for Mookerji[1] has well reasoned that if Sandrocottus were himself illegitimate or had extreme ancestral "meanness" he could not have emphasised to Alexander the detestation in which the then-reigning king of the Indian interior was held by his subjects. Do we find Chandragupta "born in humble life" in the way we want ? The Brahmanical tradition[2] makes him at the same time a descendant of the imperial Nanda line and the child of a Sudra woman. Though the Puranas themselves contain no hint of any kind of birth and merely state that the Nandas were uprooted by the Brahmana Chanakya who anointed Chandragupta as king, a commentator on the Vishnu Purana brings in Mura as the wife of King Nanda and the mother of Chandragupta and a commentator on the *Mudrārākshasa* goes further and says that while his father was called Maurya and was a scion of the Nanda family his mother Mura was a woman of the Sudra caste. The Chandragupta of the Brahmanical tradition has therefore to be put out of court. What about the Buddhist and Jain traditions? Mookerji[3] remarks : "Buddhist and Jain traditions are at one in declaring for him a noble birth." According to the latter,[4] "Chandragupta was born of a daughter of the chief of a village community who were known as 'rearers of royal peacocks' (*mayūra-poshaka-grāme*)." This story is at variance with what the Greek account suggests. The testimony of the Buddhist books is still more so and the variance is of the greatest importance since modern

[1] *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, pp. 9-10.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16, 18-19.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

scholarship accepts the Buddhist version of Chandragupta's origin. The *Mahāvamsa* and the canonical work *Dīgha Nikāya* sum up the version. The first[1] states that he was "born of a family of Kshatriyas called Moriyas" (*Moriyānanāṁ khattiyānaṁ vaṁse jātaṁ*) and the second characterises[2] his family as the ruling Kshatriya clan known as the Moriyas of Pipphalivana. "It is now generally accepted", writes Mookerji,[3] "that the old clan-name Moriya offers a more satisfactory explanation of Maurya, the name of the dynasty founded by Chandragupta, than the supposed derivation from his mother Mura or father named Maurya. We may therefore readily accept the view that Chandragupta belonged to the Khsatriya clan called the Moriyas originally ruling over Pipphalivana which probably lay in U.P." Surely there is no birth in humble life here.

Raychaudhuri[4] attempts to give humble-life birth to Chandragupta by arguing to the effect that his family, though of Kshatriya rulers, was no longer ruling when he was born and that even Pipphalivana must have been absorbed into Mahapadma Nanda's empire before his birth. But we get from the Buddhist books no impression of Pipphalivana in such a state. Chandragupta's father was still a ruler at the time his wife was carrying Chandragupta. Barua[5] writes : "The *Mahāvamsa-tīkā* tells us that Chandragupta's mother who was the chief queen of the then reigning Moriya king fled in disguise from the Moryia capital to Pushpapura (Pāṭaliputra) during her advanced pregnancy, and gave birth to her son there when the Moriya territory was seized by a powerful neighbour (*sāmantaraññā*)." The *Mahābodhivamsa*[6] speaks of "Prince (*Kumāra*) Chandragupta, born of a dynasty of kings (*narinda-kula-sambhava*) hailing from the city known as Moriyanagara, which is built by the Sākyaputtas". A king-father and a queen-mother hardly point to a non-ruling family in a long-reduced Pipphalivana. The only thing possible to aver is that Prince Chandragupta was not born in his father's kingdom but during his mother's exile after his father's defeat and death. This may be called "humble life", but his "dynasty of kings" cannot be overlooked and the Greek phrase about Sandrocottus's aspiring to royalty in spite of being a commoner is not in tune with it, unless we mean by royalty only such grandiose kingship as was Mahapadma's or afterwards Chandragupta's own as master of Magadha. Even if we do not talk in terms of a king-father and queen-mother, to be "a

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[2] II. 167.
[3] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 56.
[4] *The Political History of Ancient India*, p. 181.
[5] *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, Part I, p. 49.
[6] Ed. Strong, p. 98.

scion of the Kshatriya clan of Moriyas, an offshoot of the noble and sacred sept of the Sâkyas who gave the Buddha to the world"[1] is scarcely to be what the Greek account suggests. The Kshatriya caste is attributed to Chandragupta by every Buddhist book. The *Divyavadana*[2] has no reference to Pipphalivana, yet it too mentions Chandragupta's son Bindusara as a lawfully annointed Kshatriya king and his grandson Asoka is described as a Kshatriya.

Before we close we may touch on Chandragupta's dynastic title in connection with what the Greeks have to record about the dynasty or the title of Sandrocottus. Barua,[3] identifying the two kings, yet admits: "Chandragupta does not appear to have been known to Megasthenes and, for the matter of that, to most of the Greek writers, as a scion of the Maurya family." In other words, these writers never called Sandrocottus by any such name as "Maurya". Another point is Strabo's information about the kings of the Prasii: "The king, in addition to his family name, must adopt the surname Palibothros, as Sandrocottus, for instance, did, to whom Megasthenes was sent on an embassy." Nothing known about the Mauryas agrees with this information. They did not even call themselves by their family-name. Asoka mentions his own personal name just twice in the inscriptions: the dynastic title appears nowhere. He does not refer at all to either his father or grandfather by name. The inscription we possess of his grandson Dasaratha is equally void. And no narrative about the Mauryas indicates any use of a term corresponding to "Palibothros" in the time of any Maurya.

Sometimes it is argued[4] that the Greeks do mention the Mauryas when they refer to a tribe called the Morieis. But if "Morieis" stands for the clan Moriyas about which the Buddhist tradition speaks and if Sandrocottus is Chandragupta Maurya, it is all the more difficult to understand how the Greek writers never associated it with Sandrocottus. If, aware of such a term, Megasthenes who lived at Palibothra and knew Sandrocottus personally omitted still to introduce it in his account, we may feel almost certain that Sandrocottus was no Maurya.

A final desperate bid to see a Maurya in Sandrocottus may be made by drawing our attention to two things. First, the *Mahāvamsatīkā* which connects Chandragupta with the Moriyas accounts for their name by a tradition averring that they built in their capital "peacock palaces that were filled and resounded with cries of peacocks".[5] Secondly, the Greek writer Aelian recounts how the

[1] Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, p. 22.
[2] Ed. Cowell, p. 370.
[3] *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, Part I, p. 49.
[4] *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, p. 24.
[5] *Vamsatthappakāsini*, I, p. 180.

extensive park attached to the palace of Sandrocottus at Palibothra was full of tame peacocks. But can the chronology of Indian history be made to depend on such bagatelles ? Besides, peacocks are not the only birds Aelian speaks of : he refers also to pheasants abounding in the park and observes that parrots were especially kept there.[1]

Years ago, it used to be a strong argument to note the concordances between the account by Megasthenes and the information contained in *Kautīlya Arthaśāstra* : the latter book was literally taken to be by the minister of Chandragupta Maurya. But today the situation has changed. "There are grave doubts", writes Raychaudhuri,[2] "as to whether in its present shape the famous book is as old as the time of the first Maurya...." Mookerji[3] also writes : "Many scholars...regard the present text as of a much later date. It is, doubtful, therefore, how far we may regard the system of administration depicted in it as applicable to the Maurya period." Dr. Beni Prasad[4] observes : "Many scholars now refuse to accept the view that the work was really composed by Kautīlya or any statesman of the type, and they regard it as of a much later date. Some bring it down to the third century A.D., though others would prefer a date three or four centuries earlier." Barua[5] pronounces : "The prose treatise of the *Arthśāstra*, as we now have it, is not only post-Asokan but post-Sunga in date." Of course we must not jump to the extreme of thinking that Megasthenes and the *Arthśāstra* differ *toto coelo* : there are points of similarity, some of which are fairly sharp but several are of a very general nature and none of them absolutely crucial. The proponents of a late dating of the book urge, as M.A.Mehendale[6] notes, that in matters of essential details its author and Megasthenes entirely differ and that the rules of government laid down by the *Arthaśāstra* pertain to a small-sized state and not to a large kingdom like that of Sandrocottus or of an empire such as Chandragupta's. The very concordances on which the Sandrocottus-Chandragupta argument used to be built are not sufficient. Allan[7] pertinently remarks : "Great ingenuity has been displayed, but with little real success, in finding in the *Arthaśāstra* passages to prove its Maurya date by comparison with statements of Megasthenes. Coincidences indeed occur, but many of them are repeated in other ages of Indian history, and the differences are much more striking. Megasthenes finds more corroboration in Manu than in Kautilya."

[1] The passage is quoted in *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, p. 104.
[2] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 286.
[3] Ibid., p. 66.
[4] Ibid., pp. 303-304.
[5] *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, Part II, p. 42.
The Age of Imperial Unity, p. 275.
The Cambridge Shorter History of India, (1943), p. 40.

Now we may pass our judgment. Not a single significant point can be urged for William Jones's hypothesis. Even if we ignore the new implications read by us in the Greek accounts, the Indian accounts do not bear out either the identification of Xandrames with a Nanda or of Sandrocottus with the first Maurya. Hence *cadit questio* — and we are compelled to look for a less leaky theory.

To be continued

K. D. SETHNA

Students' Section

SOME WORDS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

(Unpublished)

...AN outside influence can bring depression, disturbance, doubts, everything else. It can affect the health, the sleep, everything.

...There are people you mix with who have doubts, suggestions, depression, jealousies, dissatisfaction with the Mother's action. They can easily throw that on you without intending it. These influences are all around in the atmosphere. It is not sufficient to avoid this or that person. You have to be on guard and with self contained.

26-3-1935

*   *

One has not to get disturbed inwardly when there is a lapse, but quietly turn towards recovery of the true consciousness. In that case the recovery would be much quicker.

10-7-1935

POEMS

OUR ALL

Thou art our all, our heart and soul,
Our life, our light, our spirits' goal.
For Thee is our all, since all is Thine;
We'd simply serve Thee, Love Divine !

Our days would wake to work for Thee
With a cheerful smile untiringly:
Our nights in Thine own peace would rest
In starlit worlds close to Thy breast.

Our joys would rise to reach Thy feet;
In sorrows' depths but Thee we'd meet;
Our journeyings on Thy path proceed,
And nought can ever stay their speed.

The blessed day shall surely come
When in Thy heart, our hearth and home,
We'll live a blissful life divine,
Thyself our own, our self all Thine.

Pujalal

HOMAGE

If physical contact now with you is rare,
I'm content to kiss you with my sight and breath
And consecrated thoughts of devotion for you;
Even hell cannot deprive me of that.

My aspirations and prayers are the incense I burn,
They rise up to you night and day;
And love, joy, gratitude are the flowers few,
In adoration at your Feet Divine I lay.

A garland of flowers rare I string,
In which every one its story can tell
Of joyous victories over untruth,
And actions of devotion done well.

With faith and peace and contentment in my heart,
A boon I ask of you, just one:
O make complete my humble surrender to you,
Your Will in my will ever done.

Tim

THE SRI AUROBINDO CENTRES IN INDIA

A Report with some Reflections

To visit, during the past sixteen months, fifty-six of the one hundred and forty-four Sri Aurobindo centres in India has been an inspiring and instructive experience. If the mother-beacon is indeed here in Pondicherry, the outlying centres stand also as lesser light-houses of the spirit in this land of light. A dozen centres have sprung up in other countries as well.

These Sri Aurobindo societies are of several types, for they have grown spontaneously, with no pattern imposed from Pondicherry. Contrary to the common assumption that this Integral Way is for intellectuals alone, at least a score of centres have taken root in villages.

In Bijapur District of Mysore State a dozen village Sri Aurobindo centres flourish. They were awakened, it is said, through the devoted labours of a resident of one of these hamlets, our late *gurubhai*, Madhura Chhanda. It is reported that in many of these centres there is a daily meeting, weekly a longer session, and monthly an all-day gathering. All of these centres unite in an annual camp in which a senior *sadhak* from the Ashram in Pondicherry usually participates. Those who have done so tell us that the Sri Aurobindo centres in these villages are a powerful influence in the total life of the area.

Most of the centres in this land are in cities and towns. Many of them begin by meeting in a room set apart for that purpose in the home of a member. They tend to outgrow such quarters and to move into a special room or building, with a greater sense of freedom for members to come and go. Increasingly centres take the form of ashrams. They seem to me to demonstrate convincingly the advantages of the ashram type of centre for the Mother's work.

As in the parent Ashram in Pondicherry, the birth and the development of the centres have been spontaneous, organic, not promoted "from the top down", and as with individuals in the Ashram, so in the case of the centres, the Mother has stood as the staunch guarantor of the freedom of each to develop according to its *swabhav*. In the first centre I visited I was told that it had started, not by design but "almost by accident".

The Master and the Mother have set an inspiring example to the Sri Aurobindo societies in their never seeking for numbers. The Master once declared, "Well-known or unknown has absolutely no importance from the spiritual point of view. It is simply the propagandist spirit. We are not a party

or a church or a religion seeking adherents or proselytes. One man who earnestly pursues the Yoga is of more value than a thousand well-known men."

The Mother has placed before these groups a high standard of life. When requested for a message for the opening of a certain centre, she sent the following:

"To open a centre is not sufficient in itself. It must be the pure hearth of a perfect sincerity in a total consecration to the Divine. Let the flame of this sincerity rise high above the falsehoods and the deceptions of the world."

Appointing me to the work of visiting among the centres from time to time, the Mother said, "We want them to know that we wish to be helpful to them in their work." A few typical Sri Aurobindo centres will be described, and certain impressions about them may be shared, for whatever they may be worth to those who value a fuller acquaintance with the Mother's work.

The first tour took me to Gujerat, for it seemed wise to get my first introduction to the work in one of the areas where it was reputed to be strongest. Nadiad stands out as an impressive centre in a district town. When I think of the *gurubhais* in Nadiad I am reminded that when I have sometimes asked the Mother whether a certain organisational development would be a good thing she has replied, "It all depends on the individuals". The centres that have seemed to me to be the most effective are those in which, as in Nadiad, there is a core of *sadhaks* of marked devotion and not without personal gifts and abilities.

In Nadiad they seem to be aware that the literature service is one of the readiest ways of doing the Mother's work. They maintain a well-stocked library and book-stall, open daily. Many college students attend the centre's weekly meetings and those held on special days. The work in the near-by villages, Arera, Khedbrahma and Sojitra, is encouraged and helped by the Nadiad brothers and sisters. Arera, aided by its good neighbours, played host to the first camp ("Shibir") of the Sri Aurobindo centres of Gujerat and Saurashtra two years ago. During my Nadiad visit public meetings in the Town Hall were well-attended and the people seemed responsive.

A high point of the second tour was the second Mahagujerat Camp in Surat, the entire first week of June, 1956. Gathered there were nearly two hundred of the brothers and sisters from the score of Sri Aurobindo centres of Gujerat and Saurashtra. This camp was a rich experience for us all, with those Pondicherry Ashram *sadhaks* from Gujerat, Purani and Sundaram, contributing largely to the programme. Each morning, after group meditation

and breakfast and inspiring choral singing, these *gurubhais* offered discourses on the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and on the Spiritual Society (*adhyatmic samaj*). On most of the afternoons the Mahamandal, that is, the Shibir's committee of the whole, composed of one or more representatives from each centre, would see to the conduct of the camp's affairs and would also take up problems and opportunities of the work in the centres.

In these sessions, as generally in the meetings in the centres I have visited, I was struck by the apparent scarcity of "ego-antics" in this society. As in Pondicherry, so in the centres the Mother's living Presence seems to subdue and master the ego to an unusual degree.

One may also bear grateful witness to the quality of the fellowship (*satsanga*) in this camp, as in the centres generally throughout India. Often have I been vividly reminded of that statement of the Master concerning Mahalakshmi :

> "Where there is affinity to the rhythms of the secret world-bliss, and response to the call of the All-Beautiful, and concord and unity and the glad flow of many lives turned towards the Divine, in that atmosphere she consents to abide."

The calibre of the Mother's sadhak-workers in Gujerat and Saurashtra impressed me, as they have in many another centre. A creative current was evidenced in the meetings of the Mahamandal at Surat. We were aware that we were in the early months of the New Age, and a current of creative expectancy was strong in our *satsanga*. In one of the sessions an ardent and able younger *gurubhai*, an I.A.S. official, expressed his concern for the deepening of the spiritual society (*adhyatimic samaj*) among us, of which we had been hearing so much from our speakers. He suggested that the members of each local centre explore the possibility of increasing their common life so that it might become one of deep, fraternal sharing, even to the point of forming small ashram-like cooperative living groups wherever several members had come to feel a sense of inner Call to such a life.

This *gurubhai* also suggested that each of us review his present life to see if there are not connections, commitments and activities which are not of the Mother's work—and perhaps not her best will for us—which should be dropped, in view of the demands of her work in this New Age. One felt that there was among the brothers and sisters of this *Shibir* a disposition to take such a friendly challenge seriously.

At that time I recalled that as I, before venturing on my first tour, was consulting with an Ashram *gurubhai* who is in close touch with the Mother's

work in Gujerat, he said he believed that a coming development in the work would be the tendency in local centres to form small ashrams. On that very tour I found, in three centres in succession, that quite independently of each other (I do not say independently of the Mother's Inspiration !) there had come to several members the impulse to explore that very possibility.

On the third tour I visited three ashram-type centres, the Delhi Branch of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the ashrams at Jwalapur (Hardwar) and Charthawal, near Muzaffarnagar. On later tours I was impressed by other ashram centres in Panna, M.P., and Mala, W.B.

When I visited it last in September of '56, the Delhi Branch of the Ashram had undergone a marvellous transformation since the year before. Then I had joined its founder, Surendra Nath Jauhar, and Governor Diwakar in motoring out to see the old property near Qutub Minar, some nine miles from the capital. As we have seen so many work projects blossom out under the Mother's Hand, so in this instance, in place of the semi-dilapidated large building and weedy grounds of a year before I saw an impressive Ashram building, an edifice adequate for the Mother's Work in India's great capital.

At the centre of the Ashram, which has accommodation for some fifteen inmates and guests, is a beautiful hall for worship, meditation and meetings, with a Sri Aurobindo Library attached. Adjacent to the main Ashram building rises a vision in marble, the *Samadhi* of the Master, designed by the Mother. There are spacious grounds, in process of beautification.

To the school, started some sixteen months ago in this inspiring setting, there have been attracted by this time some 175 boys and girls, up to the eighth standard. Here, with Nathaniel Pearson as Headmaster and his corps of fourteen teachers, a fine group of eager youngsters are undergoing an adventure in Integral Education, as conceived by Sri Aurobindo and demonstrated by the Mother in the Ashram School and International University Centre in Pondicherry. A prized feature of their school life has been their spending (that is, those who wish to do so) the month of December as the Mother's guests in the parent Ashram in Pondicherry. The Delhi Branch of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is becoming something of a place of pilgrimage for an increasing number of visitors to Delhi. One senses here significant potentialities for growth in the Divine Service.

We shall reserve for our next instalment a brief account of other ashrams we have mentioned, as well as other noteworthy centres of the Mother's Work.

As these ashrams were visited, the impressions of many years were confirmed, that, beyond their meaning for the individual sadhana, such spiritual-social units are sources of strength for a movement. Instead of disciples living scattered over a town or city—a few ashes on a vast cold hearth—their constant

satsanga in an ashram can help keep alive the spiritual glow, and one does not mean by that a merely emotional enthusiasm. Compare the morning and evening meditation and worship together in an ashram with the usual meeting, only weekly, for sadhaks in other types of centres. In a metropolis like Bombay or Calcutta, the time required for scattered members of a Sri Aurobindo centre to cross the city and come together for a meeting, and then to return home, is a big factor in the disciples' time budget, leaving less time for the worship, study and work together.

In an ashram there is also a constant reminder of the dedicated purpose of one's life, unlike the atmosphere of ordinary society. Of great importance to any movement with a divine mission in the world is the fact that in an ashram dedicated to a world-transforming purpose it is natural for the sadhak to keep a steady creative interest in the Divine Work.

Let us recall certain statements of Sri Aurobindo concerning the place of work in His Integral Yoga:

> Yoga through work is the easiest and most effective way to enter into the stream of this sadhana.

> Work for the Mother done with the right concentration on her is as much a sadhana as meditation and inner experiences.

> To go inside in order to have experiences and to neglect the work, the external consciousness, is to be unbalanced, one-sided in the sadhana—for our Yoga is integral....One must have the same consciousness in inner experience and outward action and make both full of the Mother.

I shall not forget what the Mother said at the beginning of the interview which led to my Call to the work of visiting the centres. She declared, "There is an important difference between work for the Divine and the Divine's Work, no matter how consecrated the person and however good the work may be."

The more I have pondered this utterance of the Divine Mother concerning the distinction between "work for the Divine and the Divine's Work" the more light has broken from it, light which has every relevance for the life of the Sri Aurobindo centres and for everyone of us. Before the advent of the two Yugavatars and their Integral Yoga the world was looked upon by religions as merely "a vale of soul-making". It mattered little what work one did, so long as it accorded with his inner development. There has long been among

us in India the Gita's standard of offering to the Divine, in the spirit of *nishkama karma*, whatever our work may be. This is, to be sure, a lofty standard, as compared with the usual selfish motivation for one's work, including work that is partly for the sake of that extension of oneself, the family. But if we are content with the traditional religious attitude to work, what becomes of the Divine Will, disclosed to us by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, for the transformation of life, including human society? No more may we, their disciples, pass our days merely in some good employment, while seeking to grow inwardly. Are we not called to become—in the process of growth and in the interest of maximum spiritual development—collaborators, in some degree, in world-transformation?

Consider—as I have done in talks with *gurubhais* in the centres since the Mother drew this "important difference" to our attention—how forcefully the distinction between "work for the Divine and the Divine's Work" is illustrated by Sri Aurobindo's career. Suppose he had yielded to his father's pressure to become an I.C.S. officer. In that capacity he would doubtless have served with distinction and set a high standard of wise and even-handed administration and personal integrity. He might even have found time, at least during retirement, to write something on spiritual subjects. But what a monumental tragedy if he had failed to steer the course of his life by the North Star of his pioneering avataric mission in the world in this age of humanity's supreme crisis!

The first avatars in history with a thoroughly evolutionary view of life and the universe, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have shown us that we have not only to realise the Divine in His eternal immutable *Being* but also to manifest the Divine in Her dynamic *Becoming*. This makes it a question of capital importance whether we are spending our time and energy and substance in work that is largely for the perpetuation of the existing order of things—work which we offer to the Divine in the spirit of *nishkama karma*—or are, on the other hand, participating consciously in the Divine's own pioneering work—and still, of course, in the same selfless spirit.

Need we add that all of the Mother's Work in this Ashram, in the centres, and elsewhere, is work on the divine frontier? What other work on earth can be more so? And if we, her sadhaks, do not offer ourselves for the Mother's work, who will do so? This we have been asking ourselves as we have pondered together in the centres the Mother's words, "There is an important difference between work for the Divine and the Divine's Work."

In a later interview, when I reported to her the heart-searching her statement seemed to be inducing in the members of the centres to whom I have passed it on, the Mother said that there is still another important type of work,

"divine work", that is, work which perfectly expresses one's developed spiritual consciousness.

Before I left on the fourth tour, the Mother made another statement of very great meaning for the work of the centres, but that must await the concluding instalment of this report, as also a description of several other centres recently visited.

JAY SMITH

To be continued

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